An Analysis of the Rise, Use, Evolution and value of anglo-american commando and special forces formations 1939-1945

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An analysis of the rise, use, evolution and value of Anglo-American commando and special forces formations, 1939-1945

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the subject of

WAR STUDIES

by

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King's College London, August 2008

Abstract

Despite the seemingly never failing popularity of the subject in non-scholarly works of popular history, the academic study of specialist formations and irregular warfare has remained as broadly elusive and as specialist as the practitioners of special operations themselves. This thesis serves as a holistic study of the development, application and value of Anglo-American commando and special forces formations, 1943-1945.

Placing the development and use of these units within the broader context of the Anglo-American 'special relationship' reveals a close, almost symbiotic, bond between Britain and the United States. This relationship, characterised at all levels by a spirit of interdependency and cooperation, was instrumental in how many of these units were conceived and consequently evolved. Although of a mutually supportive nature, it is fair to suggest that the US profited more from a close alliance in these fields than did the British. By the time the US entered the war Britain had already developed a range of unconventional forces and had begun to amass significant experience in their application. The willingness of the British to share this experience and guide their ally's first forays into this field was of the utmost importance to American developments. British support would continue throughout the war to broadly outlast the more general decline of Britain's strategic contribution; it would take time before the US, having gradually forged many of their own unique approaches towards these units, were able to approach the British volume of irregular operations.

Despite such clear allied commonality, an analysis of the Anglo-American attitudes towards the inception, organisation, expansion, use and disbandment of the varied commandos and special forces ultimately reveals notable points of divergence between the policies and perceptions of the two allies. This work serves to examine and evaluate how and why Britain and the US, respectively, went about conceiving both commandos and special forces and serves to chart the evolution of their use. Analysing the roles and employment of these formations, charting the evolution of their command and control, and investigating the notion of 'correct' use, this study also serves to examine the impact of these formations on the course of the Second World War and, through an assessment of their merits and failings, presents a favourable overall conclusion as towards the value and cost-effective nature of these units.

Contents

Acknowledgements

Despite the inherently solitary nature of the beast, the completion of this thesis either could not have occurred, or at least would have been made inherently more difficult, without the help and support offered by a number of individuals. My sincere thanks go to the long-time support of my supervisor, Professor Brian Holden Reid, King's College London, for his council, patronage and guidance which have stretched over the better part of the last decade. His help has been quite instrumental to the development of this thesis. I would also like to thank Professor Hew Strachan of All Soul's College, Oxford University whose supervision of my Master's dissertation was an important stage in helping me to germinate many of my formative ideas leading to this thesis.

From the Department of War Studies I owe a debt of gratitude to Professor Michael Dockrill, Dr. Steve Weiss and Dr. Bill Philpott for their guidance and support. I would also like to thank my friend and fellow PhD candidate Patrick Rose for providing a perfect sounding board for my ideas.

I would like to thank Professor M.R.D. Foot for kindly agreeing to meet with me to discuss both his virtually unparalleled knowledge of SOE as well as his own wartime experiences as an Intelligence Officer in the SAS Brigade. Professor Foot was also instrumental in introducing me to the late Lord George Patrick John Rushworth Jellicoe, KBE, DSO, MC with whom I feel privileged to have shared some correspondence relating to his wartime role as commander of the Special Boat Squadron.

I am grateful to the States of Guernsey Education Authority for the financial backing necessary to complete this PhD.

The final thanks must be to my long-suffering family without whose love, patience and financial help the completion of this thesis would have never have been possible. Thank you one and all.

Glossary of terms

AAI	Allied Armies Italy
ACO	Adviser on Combined Operations
AFHQ	Allied Force Headquarters [Allied headquarters for the Mediterranean theatre]
AIB	Allied Intelligence Bureau
APD	Fast-destroyer transport ship
ATB	Amphibious Training Base
BAF	Balkan Air Force
BPB	Boom Patrol Boat
BSC	British Security Co-ordination [early British intelligence organisation in the US]
CBI	China, Burma, India [Theatre]
CCO	Chief of Combined Operations
CCOR	Chief of Combined Operations Representative
CGS	Chief of General Staff
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
C-in-C	Commander-in-Chief
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
CNO	Chief of Naval Operations [US]
CO	Commanding Officer
CODC	Combined Operations Development Centre
COHQ	Combined Operations Headquarters
COI	(Office of …) Co-ordinator of Information [US]
COLO	Combined Operations Liaison Officer
COPP	Combined Operations Pilotage Parties
COS	Chiefs of Staff [British]
COSD	Combined Operations Supply Depot
COSU	Combined Operations Scout Unit
CTC	Combined Training Centre
DCGS	Deputy Chief of the General Staff
DCO	Director of Combined Operations
DDGS	Deputy Director of General Staff
DDO	Deputy Director of Operations

DNI	Director of Naval Intelligence
DOD	Director of Operations Division [Admiralty]
DDOD	Deputy Director of Operations Division [Admiralty]
DOL	Department of Opposed Landings
DSO	Directorate of Special Operations
EMFFI	*État-majeur des Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur* [Fighting French General Staff in London]
ETO	European Theatre of Operations
FETO	Far Eastern Theatre of Operations
FFI	*Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur*
FLEX	Fleet Landing Exercises
FOS	Flag Officer, Submarines
FSSF	First Special Service Force
G-2	Divisional Intelligence Staff [US]
G-3	Divisional Operations Staff [US]
GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC	General Officer, Commanding
G(R)	Middle East cover for SOE
G(RF)	General Staff Branch (Raiding Forces)
GS(R)	General Staff (Research)
IC	In Command
IBT	India-Burma Theatre
ILRS	Indian Long Range Squadron
IO	Intelligence Officer
IS 9	Intelligence School 9 [MI 9 Branch concerned with escape and evasion]
ISD	Inter-Allied Service Department [precursor to the SRD]
ISLD	Inter-Service Liaison Department [MI6 cover name]
ISSU-6	Inter-Service Signals Unit – 6 [SOE cover name]
ISTDC	Inter-Service Training and Development Centre [British pre-war department that experimented with amphibious operations]
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff [US]
JIC	Joint Intelligence Committee
JSM	Joint Staff Mission
LAF	Libyan Arab Force

LCOCU	Landing Craft Obstacle Clearance Unit
LCN	Landing Craft, Navigation
LCP	Landing Craft, Personnel
LFA	Land Forces, Adriatic
LRDG	Long Range Desert Group
LRP	Long Range Patrols [forerunner of LRDG]
LRPG	Long Range Penetration Groups [Chindits]
LRRP	Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols
LST	Landing Ship, Tank
MEDTO	Mediterranean Theatre of Operations
MEF	Middle East Forces
MEHQ	Middle East Headquarters
MI(R)	Military Intelligence (Research)
MNBDO	Mobile Naval Base Defence Organisation
MTO	Mediterranean Theatre of Operations
MU	Maritime Unit [OSS]
NATO	North African Theatre of Operations
NCAC	Northern Combat Area Command [US/Chinese Command in Burma]
NCDU	Naval Combat Demolitions Unit [US]
NCO	Non-commissioned Officer
NORSO	Norwegian Special Operations [Group]
OC	Officer Commanding
OETA	Occupied Enemy Territory Administration
OG	Operational Groups [OSS]
OR(s)	Other Rank(s)
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PAIC	Persia and Iraq Command
PPA	Popski's Private Army
PWE	Political Warfare Executive
RAF	Royal Air Force
R&A	Research and Analysis [OSS Branch]
R&D	Research and Development [OSS Branch]
RCNVR	Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve
RCT	Regimental Combat Team
RE	Royal Engineers

RF	Raiding Forces
RM	Royal Marines
RMBPD	Royal Marine Boom Patrol Detachment
RN	Royal Navy
RNVR	Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve
RSR	Raiding Support Regiment
SA	Special Activities [COI Branch]
SAARF	Special Allied Airborne Reconnaissance Force
SACO	Sino-American Cooperative Association
S&R	Scouts and Raiders [US]
SAS	Special Air Service
SACMED	Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean
SACSEA	Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia
SBS	Special Boat Section [also Squadron and later Service]
SBU	Special Boat Unit
SDF	Sudan Defence Force
SEAC	South East Asia Command
SEU	Special Engineering Unit
SF	Special Forces
SFHQ	Special Forces Headquarters
SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces
SI	Secret Intelligence [OSS Branch]
SIG	Special Interrogation Group
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service
SO	Special Operations [OSS Branch]
SOE	Special Operations Executive
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOG	Small Operations Group
SOM	Special Operations Mediterranean [Branch]
SPOC	Special Projects and Operations Centre
SRD	Services Reconnaissance Department [AIB branch responsible for sabotage]
SRS	Special Raiding Squadron [Also Sea Reconnaissance Section, forerunner of SRU]
SRU	Sea Reconnaissance Unit

SS	Special Service [Not to be confused with German *Schutzstaffel* in this instance]
SSO	Strategic Services Officer [OSS]
SSRF	Small Scale Raiding Force
SWPA	Southwest Pacific [Theatre]
TOE	Table of Organisation and Equipment [US equivalent of British War Establishment]
UDT	Underwater Demolition Team
USAAF	United States Army Air Force
USANIF	United States Army - Northern Ireland Forces
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USN	United States Navy

Introduction

Throughout the course of the Second World War both Britain and the United States individually and jointly created a number of military formations whose purpose was the conduct of irregular, specialist operations that fell beyond the capacity of their conventional armed forces. These formations were a direct precursor to the 'Special Forces', 'Special Operations Forces' and elite light-infantry units which form such a prominent part of modern military force structures. This thesis is concerned with examining how and why Britain and the United States developed and used these formations in the Second World War. It serves to chart how these formations evolved during the war; to examine the relationship between 'commando' (or 'ranger' in the American vernacular) formations and 'special forces';[1] to place the development and use of these units within the context of the broader Anglo-American alliance; to analyse the impact which these formations had on the Second World War; and to make an assessment of their value in cost-effectiveness terms.

Although irregular warfare and special operations during the Second World War are the subjects of an ever-increasing body of literature, for the most part, however, coherent academic analysis of the rise, evolution, deployment, and value of these formations has remained elusive. Whilst certain units (such as the SAS or US Army Rangers), and certain operations (such as the Dieppe raid), have attracted a wealth of works of dramatically varying scholarship and quality, other units and operations have received little or no attention. The neglect of certain significant American special forces (such as the OSS Operational Groups or Alamo Scouts) is particularly apparent.[2] The prolific numbers of sources which narrowly chart the history of either a specific unit or a specific operation are quite disproportionate to the scant number of works that attempt to engage with the broader phenomena of specialist formations during the Second World War.

The literature of specialist formations is all too often focused on tactics, tradecraft and the dissection of operational minutiae; it rarely examines broader issues such as the mechanics

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[1] Henceforth the term 'ranger' (without capitalisation) will be used to refer to all American units of the elite light-infantry variety whilst the term 'commando' will be used when referring to British forces of the same ilk. The umbrella term 'specialist formations' will be used to collectively encompass both special forces and commando units.

[2] As Russell F. Weigley tellingly commented: 'American military historians have mirrored the tendency of the United States Army itself to prefer preparation for and study of conventional war – to say nothing of waging it – far above examination of irregular war'. Russell F. Weigley in foreword to Heaton, Colin D., *German Anti-Partisan Warfare in Europe*, (Schiffer: Atglen, PA, 2001) p.9

of the creation and use of these units, their evolution of purpose and application, or the notion of their utility and value. For, as Colin Gray claimed, in an excellent and all too uncommon study of the strategic dimension of special operations: 'For every thousand pages in the literature [of Special Operations] which recount the deeds of derring-do, there is scarcely one page that troubles to ask whether these deeds made much of a difference to the course and outcome of a conflict'.[3] Furthermore, though there are a modest number of scholarly studies that serve to illuminate the history of the specialist formations of *either* Britain or the United States during the Second World War,[4] very few exist which analyse collectively the developments of the two allies. Yet such a joint analysis is, particularly for an understanding of the American adoption and use of specialist formations, quite essential. During the Second World War the Anglo-American 'special relationship' would result in close, and at times almost symbiotic, links between the specialist formations of the two nations. On a number of occasions this relationship and the direct interplay and co-operation between various British and American specialist units had a very great bearing on the manner of their inception, evolution and application. By taking a holistic approach, that engages with the inception, evolution, use, and value of *both* British and American special forces *and* commando formations, this thesis serves to address some of the broader deficiencies surrounding this subject's existent literature.

Today the distinction between 'Special Forces' (or, in the American vernacular, 'Special Operations Forces') and elite light-infantry units are clearly defined and well understood. Broadly considered, the two varieties of formation are distinguished by such factors as having different sized establishments; comprising a different 'type' of individual; undertaking different missions; utilising different methods; operating at different depths of deployment; and having different command and control arrangements etc.. Although both genre of formation emerged during the Second World War, such accurate distinctions between the two were seldom immediately apparent. Linked by broadly irregular mandates, the two genres of specialist unit represented two sides of the same coin, and it would take time and a degree of operational evolution before clear points of divergence between the two genres began to solidify. Because the creation, employment and evolution of special forces could be closely intertwined with that of commando formations and *vice*

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[3] Gray, Colin S., *Explorations in Strategy*, (Greenwood: London, 1996) p.xvii in Introduction.
[4] For the British perspective, see: Thompson, Julian, *The Imperial War Museum Book of War Behind Enemy Lines*, (Sidgwick and Jackson: London, 1998); Warner, Philip, *Secret Forces of World War II*, (Pen and Sword: Barnsley, 2004); or Morris, Eric, *Churchill's Private Armies*, (Hutchinson: London, 1986). For the US perspective, see: Paddock, Alfred H. Jr., *US Army Special Operations*, (University Press of Kansas, 2002); or Hogan, David W., Jr., *US Army Special Operations in World War II*, (Department of the Army: Washington D.C., 1992)

versa, it is imperative that both genre of formation are given equal consideration within this thesis.

There can be a great deal of ambiguity surrounding such esoteric terms as 'irregular warfare', 'unconventional warfare', or 'special operations'. As Mockaitis highlighted, 'the language of irregular warfare has become as elusive as the guerrillas themselves'.[5] Colin Gray has similarly noted the 'peril' of defining 'special operations' arguing that 'the exclusiveness that must characterise any good definition is contrary to the very spirit of special operations'.[6] Twenty-first century official definitions of special operations are suitably broad, and place emphasis on the diversity and flexibility of these units. The 2003 US Joint Chiefs of Staff definition, for example, holds that special operations are:

> Operations conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to achieve military, diplomatic, informational, and/or economic objectives employing military capabilities for which there is no broad conventional force requirement. .... Special operations differ from conventional operations in degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of employment, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets.[7]

Whilst such definitions certainly serve to highlight the multi-faceted nature and roles of modern-day specialist formations, such breadth does little for the study of the specialist formations of the Second World War except muddy an already confused pool of water. Rather than exacerbate confusion in the search of a more 'timeless' definition, it is suffice to provide a guide to some of the prior approaches that have been taken towards this subject, and through this, broadly justify the focus of this thesis.

Within historical appraisals of specialist formations it is a relatively common trend of analysis to selectively examine units of a particular *modus operandi*. A number of works, for example, are confined to the study of those units that conducted operations 'behind enemy lines'. Yet operations in depth, when broadly considered, although often a characteristic of special operations, were not a universal constant, and are thus inadequate as the sole point of definition for all specialist formations and activities. Also prevalent is a potentially more undesirable tendency to focus exclusively upon the 'raid' as a 'would-be hegemonic broad class of special operations activities'.[8] Yet it remains important to identify that the legacy of special operations goes beyond those well-publicised and

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[5] Mockaitis, Thomas R., *British Counterinsurgency, 1919-1960*, (Macmillan: London, 1990) p.1
[6] Gray (1996), pp.144
[7] US Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, Joint Publication 3-05, December 2003
[8] Gray (1996), p.152

infamous actions of derring do which tend to overshadow the more mundane day-to-day or inconspicuous activities of these units. To escape the 'raid' and 'behind enemy lines' myopia it thus becomes essential to also examine the much broader remit of special operations including, but not limited to, intelligence activities; work alongside indigenous populations; and tasks undertaken by maritime-orientated special forces.

Whilst this thesis strives to be intentionally broad and inclusive of a range of irregular formations and activities, it is, however, necessary to maintain a strict definition of what constituted Anglo-American commandos or special forces. The Second World War provides numerous examples of groups and organisations undertaking irregular, subversive, clandestine intelligence, or light-infantry tasks etc., and in a work of this size it would be quite impracticable to study all of these elements with the requisite degree of thoroughness. Although modern interpretations of special operations include a range of activities broadly grouped as 'non-military special operations' or 'operations other than war', such as propaganda, subversion, economic warfare, psychological warfare, and political warfare, it is simply not practicable to include these activities, or the organisations organised for their conduct, within this thesis. Such activities were never the principal occupation of either commando or special forces during the Second World War.

It becomes important to separate special forces and commando-style units from the various espionage, subversive and 'cloak and dagger' organisations and activities undertaken during the war. Perhaps the best point of distinction is that specialist formations were specially organised, clearly identifiable, units comprising regular uniformed servicemen (albeit by no means always pre-war 'regulars') who were trained to undertake irregular military tasks. As General Sir John Hackett asserted, special forces 'are not clandestine saboteurs. They are soldiers operating in uniform, engaged in legitimate military tasks'.[9] It is thus not warranted to analyse in detail the broader activities undertaken by the likes of the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) and Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), or the US Office of Strategic Services (OSS). This point notwithstanding, it will still be necessary to examine the activities of these organisations which fall within the aegis of this thesis. Under OSS, for example, a very significant proportion of US special forces would develop and it is crucial to include OSS's specially organised paramilitary groups within this study.

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[9] Hackett, J.W., 'The Employment of Special Forces', *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, (February 1952), No. 585, Vol. XCVII pp. 26-41, pp.26-27

Otto Heilbrunn divided those unconventional military operations occurring 'in the enemy's rear' into two subcategories: 'partisan operations' and 'special forces operations'.[10] This is a relatively common division. Jonathan House, employing a similar distinction, provides a solid definition:

> Unconventional, ranger, or commando operations involve a specially trained force that is self-contained – it penetrates enemy rear areas to gather intelligence or to conduct sabotage, ambushes, and other combat operations. By contrast, guerrillas or partisan warfare depends on the indigenous populations of an enemy-controlled area, although special teams of soldier-instructors may be sent to organise, train, and lead the local population.[11]

It is not practicable within the boundaries of this work to examine the broader issues of partisan warfare. When considering this subject it is, however, impossible to avoid some degree of overlap with partisan, guerrilla, or resistance operations. Many specialist formations worked closely with indigenous movements and, for certain units, such activities were their *raison d'être*, making an examination of the operations and impact of those 'special teams of soldier-instructors' absolutely essential in a holistic appreciation of specialist formations.

Another oft used mechanism through which this subject has been examined is by a consideration of military 'elites'. Elite bodies of soldiers are as old as war itself, men more talented, better trained or equipped than their counterparts who would be assigned the most important missions of their day.[12] Eliot Cohen identified three main criteria that define an elite unit: the perpetual assignment of hazardous and unusual missions; the conduct of such missions that 'require only a few men who must meet high standards of training and physical toughness, particularly the latter'; and a 'reputation – justified or not – for bravura and success'.[13] If one applies these points to special forces and their commando brethren, then most units can be considered to be elites, but not all elites are specialist formations. Special forces are more than units that purely wage war at a high standard; they wage a unique form of warfare which separates them from conventionally-orientated bodies. As John Gordon clarified: special forces 'were "elite" in the qualitative sense of their choice of personnel and excellent preparation, but they were "special" in the functional military sense of what they did'.[14]

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[10] Heilbrunn, Otto, *Warfare in the Enemy's Rear*, (George Allen and Unwin: London, 1963) p.42
[11] House, Jonathan M., *Combined Arms Warfare in the Twentieth Century*, (University Press of Kansas, 2001) p.180
[12] See Beaumont, Roger, *Military Elites*, (Robert Hale: London, 1974)
[13] Cohen, Eliot A., *Commandos and Politicians*, (Harvard University, 1978) pp.17-18
[14] Gordon, John W., *The Other Desert War*, (Greenwood Press: London, 1987) p.xix in preface

In light of both the relatively common 'behind enemy lines' and 'elites' focus of this subject, occasionally both the Chindits and airborne formations are placed within the same bracket as other special forces and commando units. This association is not warranted. Their designation of 'Special Force' and their role behind the enemy line notwithstanding, the long range penetration role of the Chindits is not broadly comparable to the activities of other special forces operating in depth – the Chindits sought to hold ground and fight rather than to raid and harass.[15] As General Julian Thompson asserted, the Chindits can be perceived as a 'conventional force' fighting 'conventional battles'.[16] Another notable point of separation, as emphasised by Scott R. McMichael, is that, unlike many specialist formations, only some five percent of the Chindits were volunteers; on the whole they were 'perfectly ordinary soldiers from perfectly ordinary battalions assigned to Wingate to be prepared for extraordinary tasks'.[17] Alongside both these factors is the issue of proportionality of scale, which undoubtedly serves as the clearest justification for the exclusion of the Chindits from this argument. The scale of the Chindit expeditions (some 3,000 men involved in the First expedition, and some 20,000 men involved in the Second) would dwarf any other specialist operation in depth.[18]

Although a consideration of the Chindits is unwarranted it is, however, important to consider their direct American 'equivalent': the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), known as either 'Galahad' in official communiqués, or (more commonly) as Merrill's Marauders. Despite the Marauders having initially been created with the intention of serving as an 'American Chindit', and despite the fact that they were partly trained under Wingate to undertake such tasks, their ultimate employment in a medium-range spearheading role would, however, have many greater similarities to the roles undertaken by other commando and ranger formations than to the work of the Chindits. It is also significant both that the Marauders were an all-volunteer force and that they consisted of noticeably smaller numbers than the Chindits.[19]

It is for much of the same reasons about the divergence of role and inflation of numbers that it is also impracticable to examine airborne formations within this study. In the early stages of the war airborne formations had a certain commonality with the nascent commando and special forces units (in the British instance the first parachute unit actually

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[15] Heilbrunn (1963), pp.166-167
[16] Thompson (1998), p.256
[17] McMichael, Major Scott R., *A Historical Perspective on Light Infantry*, (US Army Command and General Staff College: Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1987) p.13
[18] Bidwell, Shelford, *The Chindit War*, (Book Club Associates: London, 1979) p.25
[19] Ogburn, Charlton, *The Marauders*, (Harper: New York, 1959) p.33

stemmed directly from an Army Commando), and on a handful of occasions these early airborne units actually undertook missions clearly falling within the definition of special operations.[20] These points notwithstanding, irregular activities were never intended to be the principal occupation of airborne formations. Their utilisation of the parachute or glider was for transportation purposes alone, and once these formations reached the ground they were always intended to serve as normal infantry in conventional battles.[21] This fundamental discrepancy in role, combined with the significant fact that the size of airborne formations (which reached army scale by August 1944) would dramatically exceed the establishment of even the largest specialist formation, ensures that their inclusion within this study is similarly not warranted.

The importance of scale or size of establishment in the categorisation of a specialist formation is an important consideration. Special forces and commandos, the latter of which is generally larger, are in many ways defined by their size. Although the scale of their establishments and operational commitments during the course of the war often had notable variation – ranging from mere handfuls of men to concentrations upwards of two thousand men – kept in perspective, however, specialist formations rarely exceeded such numbers and, as individual formations, their proliferation and use was in no way comparable to the aforementioned examples of the Chindits or airborne formations. Issues of scale have, however, clouded some treatments of this subject. Robin Neillands, for example, claimed: 'Special Forces units were not always small. Few of them come out of the Second World War with a higher reputation than the mighty United States Marine Corps'.[22] Neilland's inclusion of the entire USMC as a special force betrays the sheer broadness, and concomitant inadequacy, of his definition. Certainly the amphibiously-trained men of the USMC fulfilled a role above the most basic conventional doctrine, but not in such a manner that they could be considered either a commando or a special force.

With these broad limitations in mind, one of the best, and more succinct, definitions of specialist formations that can be applied to this study is that offered by John Gordon in his excellent study of British special forces in the Desert War. He states that these units were

> ...not civilian saboteurs but uniformed soldiers specifically organised to carry out the high-risk functions of raiding, harassing, and intelligence gathering on the flanks or behind enemy lines. Their creation was predicated upon the assumption

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[20] As seen with operation 'Colossus', the attack against an aqueduct in Southern Italy in February 1941; operation 'Biting' the raid on radar infrastructure at Bruneval in February 1942; or various USMC Parachute Battalion deployments directly alongside the Raider Battalions in the Pacific.
[21] Frost, John, *A Drop Too Many*, (Sphere Books: London, 1980) p.118
[22] Neillands, Robin, *In the Combat Zone*, (New York University Press, 1998) p.31

> that the missions they undertook either fell outside the 'normal operations of war' or else were impossible for standard units to perform efficiently within time and space constraints.[23]

It is upon this suitably broad definition, closely relevant to the range of operations as undertaken by commando and special forces during the Second World War, that this thesis shall continue.

This argument is proceeding on the contention that the Second World War represented the beginnings of modern special forces and commando units. It would, however, be erroneous to ignore the fact that both Britain and the US had rich historical backgrounds of undertaking irregular and unconventional activities before 1939. British history from the sixteenth century onwards is full of examples of such operations; one only needs to look at the campaigns of Drake, Wolfe, or Cochrane, or to examine the methods utilised in the Peninsular War or during the 'Great Game' on the Indian Frontiers,[24] to see such a legacy.[25] Nor is it without significance that the British had a long history of being on the receiving end of irregular warfare, and their perception of the potential efficiency of such activities was certainly effected by their experiences in South Africa, Palestine, the Northwest Frontier, and Ireland.[26]

At the outset of the Second World War perhaps the most prominent British memories of irregular warfare came from the exploits of T.E. Lawrence during the Arab Revolt. In a conflict infamous for static battles of attrition, the paucity of irregular operations ensured that the exploits of Lawrence stood out like a beacon. Whilst the effectiveness of Lawrence's 'sideshow of a sideshow' is debateable, his activities did, nevertheless, prove to some of the military establishment the potential benefits of these operations: that a small, low-cost commitment of men and material organised to conduct a campaign of mobile attacks could produce a disproportionate impact; and that 'small teams of advisers and leaders, provided with money and basic weapons, can weld untrained, undisciplined, indigenous volunteers into an effective military force'.[27] Lawrence 'provided both glamour and intellectual sinew to the theory of guerrilla warfare'.[28] His exploits and, more

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[23] Gordon, p.xvii in preface

[24] Adrian Weale contended that the 'Great Game' was where 'the real roots of modern Anglo-American-influenced special forces lie'. Weale, Adrian, *Secret Warfare*, (Hodder and Stoughton: London, 1997) pp.8-9

[25] Arquilla, John (ed.), *From Troy to Entebbe*, (University Press of America: Lanham, Maryland, 1996) pp.11-12

[26] Mackenzie, William, *The Secret History of S.O.E.*, (St. Ermin's Press: London, 2002) p.3

[27] Weale, p.30

[28] Bidwell, Shelford, 'Irregular Warfare: Partisans, Raiders and Guerrillas', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, Vol.122, No.3 (September 1977) p.80

importantly, the literature and publicity that followed them, ensured that the potential for irregular activities had been realised by some, although by no means all, British military theorists and practitioners before 1939.[29]

Britain would enter the Second World War with a military that was certainly conducive towards the development and exploitation of irregular means: the British having both a small and decentralised military well experienced in the rigours of colonial warfare and a strategic culture which placed a premium on surprise, manoeuvre and peripheral attack.[30] The British strategic perspective, epitomised by the likes of J.S. Corbett and Captain B.H. Liddell Hart, held that:

> … when Britain had employed troops outside Britain they had been most effective when they had been used in amphibious roles to raid the enemy's coastline and compel him to withdraw forces which might otherwise have been used to fight Britain's continental allies, to cripple the enemy's fleet by destroying his naval bases, or to capture his overseas colonies.[31]

Nor had Britain forgotten the lessons of its irregular past. When considering the future of infantry in 1933 Liddell Hart advised that the '…. infantry soldier needs to revive the tradition of the Peninsular skirmisher, but also to carry it to a higher pitch. He should profit by the lessons of irregular warfare so that he may develop the rusefulness and the ground-craft of the guerrilla fighter'. Hart saw that an infantryman who was '*tria juncta in uno* – stalker, athlete, and marksman' could 'seize or create many opportunities for vital intervention on the modern battlefield'. Such a motivation encapsulated many of the virtues later emulated amongst those personnel of specialist formations.[32] The prominent vein of irregular actions throughout British military history ensured that, by the outbreak of the Second World War, the British 'way in warfare' was inherently amenable towards the creation and employment of specialist formations.

Before the Second World War the United States also had a long history of irregular warfare. Colin Gray has gone as far as suggesting that in its colonial phase the US 'all but invented irregular warfare in modern times'.[33] During the American Revolution the Continental militia's guerrilla-style fighting, particularly the 'strategy of partisan war'

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[29] For an overview of the array of works on, and about, Lawrence, see: Holden Reid, Brian, 'T.E. Lawrence and his Biographers', in Bond, Brian (ed.), *The First World War and British Military History*, (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1991)
[30] Mockaitis, p.146; Bidwell, Shelford and Graham, Dominick, *Firepower – British Army Weapons and Theories of War 1904-1945*, (George Allen and Unwin: London, 1982) p.224
[31] French, David, *The British Way in Warfare*, (Unwin Hyman: London, 1990) p.xv in introduction
[32] See Liddell Hart, B.H. *The Future of Infantry*, (Faber & Faber: London, 1933) pp.62-63
[33] Gray (1996), p.155

employed by Nathanael Greene, and the formation of 'Rangers' by the likes of Dan Morgan and Thomas Knowlton highlight well this pattern.[34] This legacy continued in the American Civil War during which time it was estimated that 'more than 400 ... military organisations called themselves "ranger" units.'[35] Spontaneous local events and the April 1862 Confederate Partisan Ranger Act would ensure that the South, in particular, would utilise various irregular formations, perhaps the most infamous being those under John S. Mosby or William C. Quantrill.[36] In spite of such historical experiences, it is not possible to surmise that the American 'way of war' was as amenable as that of the British towards irregular warfare.

Even as unconventional elements were proliferating in the formative stages of American history, the masses were striving to conventionalise their force structures. As Thomas Adams emphasised, when George Washington took command of the Continental Army it was his first order of business to 'create an army that could fight in the properly accepted "European" manner of its British opponents'. Furthermore, despite the colourful reputations amassed by the likes of Mosby and Quantrill during the Civil War, the US Army would emerge from that conflict firmly behind the tradition as laid out by Ulysses S. Grant. The US Army viewing the use of irregulars during the war 'as nothing more than bandits with Southern sympathies'.[37] Moreover, although the US were regularly faced with irregular threats, such as the Indians or, later the Filipino *ladrones*, the US Army would, with a few exceptions (such as General George Crook who displayed an uncommon skill in guerrilla warfare against the Apaches in the 1880's), experience notable difficulties in deviating from its European-style methods and, consequently, was broadly 'ill-prepared to fight an unconventional foe'.[38]

The result of Washington's drive to emulate European methods of fighting, alongside the victory of the Union in the Civil War against the often barbarous guerrilla bands of the South, ensured that the US military was, by the First World War, eschewing unconventional war. This, combined with the fact that during the First World War the US suffered no Somme or Passchendaele, meant that by 1939 the US were, militarily speaking, not seeking unorthodox solutions to large-unit warfare in the same manner that the British were prone to. By the eve of the Second World War, therefore, the American

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[34] Weigley, Russell F., *The American Way of War*, (Collier Macmillan: London, 1973) pp.18-39
[35] Zedric, Lance Q. and Dilley, Michael F., *Elite Warriors*, (Pathfinder: Ventura, California, 1996) p.84
[36] Millett, Allan R. and Maslowski, Peter, *For the Common Defence*, (Free Press: New York, 1994) pp.180-181
[37] Adams, Thomas K., *US Special Operations Forces*, (Frank Cass: London, 1998) p.27
[38] Millett and Maslowski, p.254; Weigley (1973) p.163

'way of warfare' was firmly committed to the notion of applying 'mass and concentration in the manner of U.S. Grant'.[39] The American orientation towards the mass of the citizen army remained pronounced and the US Army's 'long-standing suspicion of elite forces' was arguably greater than ever.[40]

Despite such pronounced divisions in their respective attitudes towards irregular warfare in the interwar period, neither Britain nor the US had, with a couple of exceptions, made any significant doctrinal or organisational strides in the fields of irregular warfare before the start of the Second World War. Within Britain, perhaps the most notable exception to this was the establishment, in 1938, of a new branch of the General Staff concerned with researching irregular methods and guerrilla warfare. This small branch, initially known as GS(R) and then as MI(R), was headed by Colonel J.C.F. Holland, an officer with some experience in such activities having served in both Arabia and later, having been wounded, during the 'troubles' in Ireland.[41] At the hands of Holland and the likes of Major Colin Gubbins (later head of SOE) this branch would produce such documents as *The Art of Guerilla Warfare* [*sic*] and the *Partisan Leader's Handbook* based on recent experiences of irregular warfare. Such documents would succinctly set out the principles for individuals and small groups 'working by stealth on acts of sabotage'; for larger groups 'working as a band under a nominated leader, and employing military tactics, weapons etc.'; and for the operations of large guerrilla forces whose 'strength necessitates a certain degree of military organisation in order to secure their cohesion and to make and carry out effectively a plan of campaign'.[42]

MI(R) would eventually merge with Section D, a small SIS section which had been raised in March 1938 for the conduct of sabotage, and a department of the Foreign Office known as Electra House which dealt with propaganda, to form the nucleus of SOE in the summer of 1940.[43] The existence of such departments immediately prior to the outbreak of the Second World War illustrates both that the British were beginning to attach certain priorities to irregular warfare and that they were attempting to translate some of their previous experiences into practical lessons.

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[39] Weigley (1973), p.313
[40] Weigley, Russell F., *History of the United States Army*, (B.T. Batsford: London, 1967) p.543
[41] Foot, Michael and Langley, J.M., *MI 9 – The British Secret Service that fostered Escape and Evasion*, (The Bodley Head: London, 1979) p.31
[42] For copies see: IWM Gubbins 04/29/8 6/1 and 6/2
[43] For a good summary of the work of these departments, see: Mackenzie, *Secret History of S.O.E.*

Although before 1939 the US had made no effort to research irregular methods in the same manner as did Section D or MI(R), a number of pre-war developments made by the USMC are, however, certainly of note. Prior to the outbreak of the Second World War the USMC had gained a proportion of recent experience of irregular warfare in South America and China, and had made efforts to translate these into a tentative doctrine with the publication of their *Small Wars Manual*.[44] Also worthy of mention are the experiments and doctrinal developments which the USMC had made in the field of amphibious operations during this period, which had resulted in strides having been made in such areas as '... utilising aircraft and submarine reconnaissance for improved intelligence ... and experimenting with the specialist groups needed to control naval gun fire and close air strikes accurately'.[45] It would be wrong, however, to view such advances (many of which were also mirrored by the Royal Marines) as anything more than tentative doctrinal investigations.

While historically noteworthy, such interwar studies and advances from both Britain and the US would have little direct application to the development and employment of specialist formations during the Second World War. These efforts were not sufficient to suggest that before the war either Britain or the US placed any great faith in the potential of special operations. The fact remains that in 1939 neither power had formed any such specialist unit nor had any coherent plans to do so. This is significant. The importance both of any interwar studies, as well as the significance of any prior historical experience or national predisposition in these fields, thus becomes greatly lessened. It was the unique conditions and circumstances of the Second World War that would promote both Britain and the US to ultimately adopt specialist formations. At the start of the war neither nation had any practical doctrine nor any vast reserves of first-hand experience about the conduct of irregular warfare upon which to base their first specialist formations. In the adoption of these units both Britain and the US would initially be in the same position of having either to invent, or assimilate, such capabilities.

This thesis serves to examine how from such a 'cold start' in 1939 and 1941 respectively, Britain and the US would go on to successfully and extensively conceive, develop and utilise a wide variety of commando and special forces units to cater for a multitude of tasks across practically every theatre of operation during the Second World War. The existent historical record regarding this subject tends to make assumptions that the pre-war patterns

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[44] USMC, *Small Wars Manual*, (United States Government Printing Office: Washington, 1940)
[45] Isely, Jeter, A. and Crowl, Philip A., *The U.S. Marines and Amphibious War*, (Princeton University Press, 1951) pp.4-5

and attitudes which Britain and America held towards these formations continued into the Second World War. It suggests that the British, historically familiar as they were with raiding operations and decentralised autonomous groupings, resorted swiftly and adapted well to the development and use of specialist formations during the war. The British found in these operations, in the opinion of Clifford, a 'buccaneering, marauding, piratical sort of game which Englishmen took to like a duck to water. They discovered a talent and a liking for it, a heritage ... [from] four centuries of pioneers, explorers, travellers, colonists, eccentrics, individuals.'[46]

As far the US is concerned, however, it is conversely assumed that the American pre-war reticence towards irregular warfare continued during the war itself. The assumption thus follows that specialist formations were neither favoured nor widely adopted by the US during the Second World War. Such deductions have caused David Thomas (who confusingly adopted the term 'commando operations' to embrace both commando and special forces units) to claim that during the Second World War only the armies of Britain, Germany and the Soviet Union would develop 'a coherent, if practical and improvisational, concept of commando operations informing the operational deployment of commando forces'. He would further assert that the 'American Army ... never grasped the concept of commando operations, or attached any value to commando forces in the second world war'.[47] Similar reckoning caused Adrian Weale to erroneously contend that the US did not create a '*military* special operations unit during the war'. [Original emphasis][48]

Existent appraisals of the American conduct of the Second World War seem to suggest that the American 'way of war' had difficulty embracing or utilising specialist formations.[49] The strategic perception of the US was notably reticent towards 'Britain's tangential, "soft-underbelly", "closing the ring" approach to waging war', an approach in which the potential for specialist operations was quite prominent.[50] Instead, they would favour a strategy that ignored the periphery and extraneous activities in place of a concentrated annihilative strike, reliant upon an 'overwhelming quantity of ... firepower and logistical capacity', against the enemy heartland – an approach in which the potential value of

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[46] Clifford, Alexander, *Three against Rommel*, (George G. Harrap: London, 1943) p.167
[47] Thomas, David, 'The Importance of Commando Operations in Modern Warfare 1939-82', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, (October, 1983), pp. 689-717, pp.690-691
[48] Weale, p.147
[49] Gray, Colin S., 'Handfuls of Heroes on Desperate Ventures: When do Special Operations Succeed?', *Parameters*, (Spring 1999), pp.2-24, p.4
[50] Weiss, Steve, *Allies in Conflict*, (Macmillan: London, 1996) p.2

specialist formations would appear to be much less pronounced.[51] Such a traditional appreciation, however, neglects some central factors related towards the creation and use of specialist formations during the Second World War. It is important to recognise that though broadly committed to a more undeviating 'way of war', the US would swiftly develop an understanding of the potential value of employing specialist formations for the furtherance of their application of mass conventional force. Understanding that beaches had to be reconnoitred; fortifications stormed; flanks protected; advances screened etc., they recognised the value of specialist formations in catering for such needs and in serving as an ancillary to their 'way of war'. Furthermore, whilst it is true that the US, on the whole, was reluctant to become embroiled in peripheral activities, they *did*, however, show a marked willingness (for both political and military reasons) to employ and exploit specialist formations – just as the British did – in peripheral theatres such as Yugoslavia, Greece, Scandinavia and the Far East. Specialist formations operated above traditional strategic impediments and the employment of these units could circumvent national strategic perceptions and policies.

The broader realities of US strategy in the Second World War have coloured and distorted analysis of the American adoption and utilisation of specialist formations. The military culture and strategic priorities of the US was not an impediment towards their development and application of specialist formations during the Second World War. Ultimately, American specialist units would proliferate, in numerical terms, almost as extensively, and in practical terms, as effectively as they did amongst the culturally more predisposed British. What the divergence of military cultures and strategic approaches between Britain and the US *did* do, however, was affect how each power would perceive virtually all aspects of the inception, use and evolution of these units. The result was that between Britain and the US there would be a range of different attitudes, policies and motivations behind the inception, expansion, organisation, proliferation, command and control, and disbandment of these units; not to mention a range of divergent ideas and priorities concerning the respective roles, methods and employment of both commandos and special forces.

This thesis will develop an argument engaging with the similarities and differences between the British and American approaches to special forces and commandos during the Second World War. It will study the inception, use and evolution of these units and, in so doing, serves to examine how and why these units were created. It will examine the

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[51] Weigley (1967), p.479

distinctions between the commando and special forces genre of unit and how these developed, as well as analysing how the employment of these units evolved during the course of the war (Chapters 1 and 2). It will examine how the Anglo-American alliance functioned in the application and evolution of these units, and highlight and assess the significance of the extensive co-operation and interdependency between Britain and the US in these fields (Chapter 3). It will address command perceptions, and the manner in which these formations were controlled during the course of the war (Chapter 4), and go on to address the notion of their 'correct' employment and application, and account for any limitations and failings therein (Chapter 5). Having done this, the thesis will draw conclusions about the value and effectiveness of these units and examine their impact upon the course of the Second World War (Chapters 6 and 7).

Chapter 1
The inception and employment of commando and ranger formations

As a prerequisite to a detailed examination of the rise, operation, evolution and value of Anglo-American specialist formations during the Second World War it is necessary to provide a brief historical narrative of the inception and employment of these varied units. In light of the eventual distinctions between commando-style elite light infantry formations and special forces it is warranted to separate the analysis of the two genres of unit. Undertaking such an approach will illustrate the divergent processes of creation, composition and *modus operandi* between these formations and will also highlight the notable interplay and dependency existing within the evolution of the two genres. This chapter thus serves to highlight the processes of the inception of commando- and ranger-style formations and examine how the roles and missions of these units evolved through deployment. The subsequent chapter will do the same for the special forces variety of unit.

The most prevalent catalyst for the creation of specialist formations within the first years of the Second World War was exigency. Specialist formations arose from weakness and limitations (both real and imagined) and a lack of opportunity to use conventional means. In their inception Plato's tenet that 'necessity … is the mother of all invention' certainly holds true. As Barry Posen contended in reference to interwar doctrinal developments: 'organisations innovate when they fail'.[1] There can be no doubt whatsoever that defeat in France and the Low Counties and continental exclusion following Dunkirk in the summer of 1940 caused Britain to opt 'for the "British way in warfare" from necessity, not choice' and paved the way for the creation of an extensive range of unconventional forces.[2] A climate of fear, surprise, impotence and conventional defeat would cause Britain to develop the Commandos, SOE, as well as a range of smaller irregular 'private armies' all within a the space of weeks in June 1940. The reverses of Dunkirk, Greece, and Narvik (and later, Crete, Tobruk and Singapore) would reinforce all too vividly the spectre of the Somme or Passchendaele. Specialist formations, small bands of specially selected men willing to take great risks for low outlay, were thus naturally attractive. They offered a means of regaining the strategic initiative and, by successful action, could personalise conflict, create heroes, and represent a glimmer of hope in an otherwise bleak looking period.

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[1] Posen, Barry R., *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, (Cornell University Press: London, 1984) p.47
[2] French, p.201

The Independent Companies were the first real British specialist formation to have been created during the war.[3] They were formed in April 1940 following the suggestion of Colonel Colin Gubbins of MI(R) who had a complex notion of forming units of specially-selected volunteers which could serve as 'guerrillas' in occupied territories supplementing their strength by raising additional 'bands' from amongst indigenous populations. Within five weeks ten Companies were formed from various sources (predominantly the Territorial Army), each comprising volunteers with an ability to 'fend for themselves' and preferably possessing 'stalking' and 'ambushing' skills.[4] In May, five hastily raised, trained and equipped Companies arrived in Norway in an effort to delay the German advance towards Narvik.[5] With scant opportunity to practice anything irregular, however, they 'were squandered in main force operations, where they lacked the numbers, fire-power and logistical support necessary for sustained combat operations'.[6] With hindsight, the expectation that uniformed personnel with negligible specialist instruction, equipment, or knowledge of the Norwegian language could operate in groups of nearly 300 men behind enemy lines has all the hallmarks of an *ad hoc* and amateurish effort. The mismatch between theory and practise, between concept and reality, which would see commando-style formations face evolution from their originally intended role and move closer towards conventional occupations and the main battle, was a pattern that would, for both Britain and the US, often be repeated. Despite such obvious limitations with their projected role, the creation of the Independent Companies is illustrative of just how rapidly elements of the British military establishment were willing to put MI(R)'s pre-war research on irregular means into effect.

The inception of the Independent Companies, both chronologically and evolutionary, was followed by that of the Army Commandos. Credit for whose formation falls at the

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[3] One formation with a somewhat irregular mandate pre-dating the formation of the Independent Companies was the Fifth Battalion Scots Guards. Formed in January 1940 the Battalion was intended to act as an elite ski-troop to aid Finland in the 'Winter War'. An ill-conceived and desperately *ad hoc* expedient designed to fight in the wrong war, it was fortunate for the British that it was swiftly disbanded in March having never been operationally deployed. Erskine, David, *The Scots Guards 1919-1955*, (William Clowes: London, 1956); and Calvert, Michael, *Fighting Mad*, (Airlife: Shrewsbury, 1996)

[4] Major-General Richardson, Director of Military Training to Divisional Commanders, 24 April 1940, WO 106/1889; and varied documents in: WO 260/32

[5] Brigadier Colin Gubbins, 'Observations on the organisation, equipment, training and discipline of the British Army, based on the recent fighting in Norway', 13 June 1940, IWM Gubbins 04/29/8; 2/3

[6] Morris (1986), p.34; Reports on Independent Companies in Norway, CAB 106/1155

door of Lieutenant-Colonel Dudley Clarke, a knowledgeable officer who had had first hand experience of counterinsurgency serving as a staff officer in Palestine following the Arab rebellion. Just two days after Dunkirk, on 5 June 1940, having discussed the need to maintain offensive action with Field-Marshal Sir John Dill, Vice-CIGS, to whom he was military assistant, Clarke had written and submitted proposals for 'Commando' forces.[7] He sought, in his own words, to give the Boer *Kommando* a rebirth, 'to aim mosquito stings with telling effect on the ponderous bulk of a German Army stretched invitingly along a coastline which might soon reach from Narvik to Biarritz'.[8]

Concurrent to the submission of Clarke's proposals Churchill was thinking on similar lines. On 6 June 1940 the Prime Minister wrote to Major-General Hastings Ismay, his Chief of Staff, suggesting that Australian formations due to arrive in Britain should be organised into lightly armed 'Striking Companies' of 250 men of the 'hunter class' which would be capable both of reacting quickly against enemy landings and of developing a 'reign of terror' against enemy-occupied coastlines with 'butcher and bolt' raids.[9] Clarke's proposals were thus submitted in a favourable climate and on 8 June the Commando concept was given official approval and ten Commandos, each comprising 500 volunteers, were authorised. Clarke was appointed to head a new War Office section, MO9, which would be responsible for raising these units and preparing cross-channel raids. On 14 June MO9 came under the larger aegis of Lieutenant-General Bourne who was appointed as 'Commander of Raiding Operations'. This arrangement was superseded on 17 July by the appointment of Admiral Roger Keyes's as Director of Combined Operations (DCO) who, as part of a larger mandate, took charge of the Commandos and raiding operations.

Churchill is representative of a foremost champion of specialist formations. David Stafford has emphasised the significance of 'Churchill's romanticism, which enlarged and fed upon his own memories of quasi-guerrilla fighting on the north-west frontier and in South Africa, and upon the legacy of T.E. Lawrence and the revolt in the desert'.[10] His personal desire to avoid stalemated campaigns of attrition epitomised by the First World War combined with 'a profound conviction that, as an underdog,

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[7] Colonel Clarke, 'The Start of "Commandos"', 30 October 1942, DEFE 2/4
[8] Clarke, Dudley, *Seven Assignments*, (Jonathan Cape: London, 1948) p.207
[9] Churchill, Winston S., *The Second World War – Volume II: Their Finest Hour*, (Cassell: London, 1950) pp.217-218
[10] Stafford, David, *British and European Resistance*, (University of Toronto Press, 1980) p.206

Britain in 1940 had to mobilise every form of warfare that it could, however unconventional', to ensure that Churchill was particularly enthusiastic towards specialist units, and would give significant support to the creation of both the Commandos and SOE.[11]

Even as the Commandos were being established, Churchill continued to expound his desire for further specialist formations. Unashamedly influenced by a perception of how the German armed forces operated,[12] on 18 June 1940 he asked General Ismay about his ideas for 'Storm Troops':

> We have always set our faces against the idea, but the Germans certainly gained in the last war by adopting it, and this time it has been a leading cause of their victory. There ought to be at least twenty thousand Storm Troops or "Leopards" drawn from existing units, ready to spring at the throat of any small landings or descents.[13]

Such perceptions were expressed again in correspondence with the Anthony Eden, Secretary of State for War, on 25 August when the Prime Minister wrote:

> .... how strongly I feel that the Germans have been right, both in the last war and in this, in the use they have made of storm troops. .... The defeat of France was accomplished by an incredibly small number of highly-equipped *élite*, while the dull mass of the German Army came on behind, made good the conquest and occupied it.[14]

As no existent formation could be diverted from the pressing needs of home defence, it was thought axiomatic that the Commandos should be formed as entirely new entities.[15] The resulting call for first-class officers and men aggrieved many regular unit commanders who were preoccupied with the problems of mobilising and equipping their own units. Spurred on by the belief that 'raids must necessarily be the British Army's main offensive contribution for the present', however, the formation of the Commandos was granted a high priority and much opposition was accordingly

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[11] Stafford, David, *Churchill and Secret Service*, (Abacus: London, 2000) p.400
[12] Although Germany used small numbers of the *Brandenburg* Regiment and specially-trained *Fallschirmjäger* units in their early *Blitzkrieg* victories, common perception in Britain in 1940 had dramatically exaggerated the prevalence and value of such forces. For a good debunking of such perceptions see: de Jong, Louis, *The German Fifth Column in the Second World War*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London, 1956)
[13] Churchill Vol.II, p.147 It should be noted that those German 'storm troopers' of the 1918 offensives were conventional forces conducting a new form of regular combined arms warfare and cannot be cited as examples of specialist forces.
[14] *Ibid.*, p.413
[15] Colonel Clarke, 'The Start of "Commandos"', 30 October 1942, DEFE 2/4

brushed aside.[16] By June 1940 the Independent Companies had become somewhat redundant and despite their lack of specialist training were immediately latched onto as a source of personnel for the Commando initiative. In November 1940 when a sufficient number of Commandos had been raised it was decided to group them, together with the remaining Independent Companies, into Special Service (SS) Battalions. [17] This was, however, a short-lived arrangement and in February 1941 the SS Battalions were restructured as Commandos and the Independent Companies therein formally merged into their establishment.

The Royal Marines may appear to have been an obvious source of recruits for the Commandos. During the interwar period the Marines were certainly the most advanced service as far as amphibious operations were concerned and they, as stipulated by the Madden Committee of 1924, had an explicit wartime role to supply the Army 'with units for special duties for which Naval experience is necessary'.[18] Despite this mandate, and the fact that in the summer of 1940 the provisional Royal Marine Brigade was 'technically available', the decree that the Commandos should be formed as entirely new units was concrete, placing the men of the Royal Marines 'severely off-limits'.[19] It was a decision that caused a degree of offence to many Marines who saw the Commando role of amphibious raiding as being a central part of their own *raison d'être*. Royal Marines would not join the Commando organisation until 1942.

The roles intended for the first Commandos in the summer of 1940 were as indistinct as those of the original Independent Companies. The Commandos were expected to undertake the dual, but seemingly opposed, roles of 'Striking Companies' of Churchill's 'butcher and bolt' policy, and of serving as 'leopards' in a defensive mobile reserve capacity to 'pounce' on any German landing against Britain.[20] Until invasion fears were allayed the 'leopard' role continued, but increasingly became tertiary to what was considered their main role: small-scale amphibious raids of limited duration, variously termed 'tip and run', 'butcher and bolt', and 'smash and grab'

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[16] Lieutenant-General R.H. Haining, DCIGS to Lieutenant-General Sir A.F. Brooke, C-in-C Southern Command, 6 July 1940, WO 199/1849

[17] Henceforth, and unless explicitly stated otherwise, the initials 'SS' will refer to Special Service rather than the German *Schutzstaffel.*

[18] It had also been proposed at this time that the Marines should form a 1,800 man 'striking force'. Thompson, Julian, *The Royal Marines*, (Pan Books: London, 2000) pp.227-228; Ladd, James, *By Land, By Sea*, (Harper Collins, London, 1998) p.59

[19] Fergusson, Bernard, *The Watery Maze*, (Collins: London, 1961) p.261; Morris (1986), p.81

[20] Minutes of DCO meeting on 'Means of assisting Home Forces with SS Troops', 30 January 1941, WO 199/604; Churchill Vol.II, pp.147; 217-218

operations.[21] It was made explicit that a Commando was 'not expected to resist an attack or to overcome a defence by formed bodies of troops .... success must depend on speed, individual ingenuity and dispersion'.[22]

Despite the necessity that had spurred their creation, the perceived need to strike back at the enemy in a series of pin-prick raids, the early Commandos performed few of these operations, and lack of experience, equipment, and inadequate training ensured that those operations that did take place in 1940 were invariably unsuccessful. The first cross-Channel raid to be undertaken, operation 'Collar' of 23/24 June 1940, was conducted by No.11 Independent Company, a composite force made up of volunteers from Nos.6, 7, 8 and 9 Independent Companies.[23] The first true 'Commando' raid, however, was the mid-July 1940 operation 'Ambassador' against Guernsey undertaken by personnel from No.3 Commando and No.11 Independent Company. Neither operation was of great success. The 'Ambassador' raid was, in the words of Lieutenant-Colonel John Durnford-Slater of No.3 Commando, 'a ridiculous, almost a comic, failure. We had captured no prisoners. We had done no serious damage. We had caused no casualties to the enemy. .... A youth in his teens could have done the same'.[24] Such amateurish operations unsettled even Churchill who vowed that there should be no more 'silly fiascos .... The idea of working all these coasts up against us by pin-prick raids ... is one to be strictly avoided.'[25]

These initially disappointing operations severely curtailed the *ad hoc* opportunistic small-scale raids that some had envisioned as being the prime occupation, and one of the key benefits, of the Commandos. The prospect of coordinated coastal raiding operations from mainland Britain remained elusive. The weighty demands of inter-service and inter-agency co-operation ensured that Combined Operations Headquarters (COHQ) would increasingly favour larger pre-planned 'set-piece' raids that encompassed, and exceeded, the deployment of entire Commandos. The larger raids conducted from Britain in the period 1941-42 such as the successful raids against the Lofotens ('Claymore') in March 1941, Vaagso ('Archery') in January 1942, or St.

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[21] Colonel Clarke, 'The Start of "Commandos"', 30 October 1942, DEFE 2/4
[22] Major-General R.H. Dewing, Director of Staff Duties, 'Formation of Commandos', 23 June 1940, WO 199/1849
[23] See reports on 'Collar', WO 106/1740
[24] Durnford-Slater, John, *Commando*, (Greenhill: London, 2002) p.32; Report on 'Ambassador', WO 106/2958
[25] Churchill Vol.II, p.572

Nazaire ('Chariot') in March 1942 do, nevertheless, illustrate that the Commandos generally conformed to their original role as 'pinprick' raiders even if they were not deployed in the frequency or scale originally intended.[26]

Although regular small-scale raids by Commando elements from Britain were infrequent, it was hoped in late-1940 that the Mediterranean and the Middle East would provide a much more suitable climate for amphibious raiding. At this time three Middle East Commandos (Nos.50, 51 and 52) had been raised from this theatre, and in February 1941 Nos.7, 8 and 11 Commandos were sent to join them as the 'Layforce' Commando group. Upon deployment, however, the strategic situation was found generally unsuitable for the planned Commando operations. For five months in early-1941 No.50 Commando was held in a defensive capacity in Crete and Egypt, whilst Nos.51 and 52 Commandos were deployed in protracted operations in East Africa which, although successful, were along the lines of those that any infantry battalion could undertake.[27]

For the Layforce Commandos (with which the Middle East Commandos were merged from March 1941) general inexperience, inadequate numbers of naval transports, and a lack of air superiority, transpired to abort most of the planned operations. Of those undertaken, such as the actions of No.50(ME) Commando at Casterlorizzo in February 1941; the No.7 Commando attempt on Bardia in April 1941; or the Litani river operation of No.11 Commando in June 1941,[28] 'none ... was a great success'.[29] Perhaps most illustrative of the confused deployments in this theatre is the use of Nos.7 and 50/52(ME) Commandos as part of the rear guard covering the evacuation of Crete. This task was born of necessity and although well performed, marked a conventional and inappropriate (although not necessarily unwarranted) use of specialist formations that were ill-equipped and too lightly armed for the task.[30] Although Commando deployments in the Mediterranean and Middle East were certainly more

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[26] See various documents in: IWM Haydon 93/28/4; JCH 2/6
[27] Dunstan, Simon, *Commandos*, (Ian Allan: Surrey, 2003) p.23
[28] Although the Litani River Battle was characterised by a number of misfortunes due to a general inexperience Laycock stated that it: '.... may be taken as a very fair example of a Combined Operation involving the opportune use of Special Service troops in a suitable role'. The general conception of the operation would, in later campaigns, become a familiar role to Commandos. Précis of lecture given by Laycock on the 'Litani River Battle', March 1942, CAB 106/389
[29] General Auchinleck, C-in-C MEF, 'Future of 1st SS Regiment', 24 and 26 July 1942, WO 201/728
[30] Young, Peter, *Commando*, (Pan/Ballantine: London, 1969) p.42

varied than those from mainland Britain, they were, nevertheless, fraught with many of the same difficulties and frustrations.

By 1942 the expediency of hitting back at the enemy in a series of pinprick raids was gradually being replaced with a desire to gain experience in, and to prosecute, large-scale amphibious actions to facilitate the commencement of conventional operations. In such a climate the amphibious experience and capabilities of the Commandos were at a premium, and their potential value in spearheading or supporting major amphibious assaults was becoming clear. Such was the perceived value of utilising Commandos in such a capacity that in March 1942 the CIGS recommended that eighteen Commandos should be raised by April 1944 with the expectation that there should be four Commandos per assault division in any future large-scale amphibious landings.[31]

Charles Messenger has claimed that No.5 Commando's participation in the May 1942 Madagascar landings 'marked the first occasion when the Commandos were used in what was to become their fundamental role, the spearheading of major amphibious assaults on opposed shores'.[32] It is, however, the use of Nos.3 and 4 Commandos in securing the flanks during the Dieppe raid that most adequately highlights this transition.[33] No.4 Commando's successful 'textbook' attack on the German battery at Varengeville-sur-mer in particular, highlighted the versatility of Commandos in such a role.[34] The COHQ report of the raid surmised that it was the success of the Commandos on the flanks of the raid that 'allowed the operation of our ships off Dieppe for all the nine hours'.[35] The lesson that Commandos could act as 'perfect flank guards' for conventional operations was disseminated to, and understood by, British and American planners alike.

Despite the many limitations with the early Commandos and the initial raiding programme, their inception would have a profound significance in paving the way for

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[31] General Paget, C-in-C Home Forces to CCO, 7 June 1943, WO 106/4158
[32] Messenger, Charles, *The Commandos 1940-46*, (William Kimber: London, 1985) p.409
[33] During the raid the Royal Marine 'A' Commando (later named No.40 Commando) also made their debut acting as a floating reserve to the central landing. Tentatively committed in such a capacity, the Commando sustained heavy casualties.
[34] Lessons from No.4 Commando's attack were subsequently turned into a War Office training manual: 'Destruction of a German Battery', Notes From Theatres of War No.11, February 1943, WO 208/3108
[35] War Cabinet to JCS, 21 August 1942, RG 218, Geographical File 1942-45, Box 58; Folder CCS 350.05 Dieppe

the creation of several other specialist formations on both sides of the Atlantic. Even if the US did not share the same reticence as the British towards attrition and the big battle, after Pearl Harbor they found themselves in much the same position as Britain in 1940: shocked, outnumbered, and conventionally defeated, they were unable to come to grips with the enemy on a large scale. Prior to Pearl Harbor, the US was already well aware of Commando developments. As well as providing information on their establishment, organisation and methods, Britain also had permitted both William J. Donovan's Coordinator of Information (COI), the forerunner of OSS, and USMC representatives to observe and receive training from the Commandos.[36] The lessons learned during these tours certainly helped influence the inception of the first US specialist formation: the USMC Raiders. James Ladd has claimed that it was 'largely on the basis' of reports made by two Marine Captains who had received Commando training, Samuel B. Griffith II and W.M. Greene Jr., that the Raiders were created.[37] More significant, however, was the lobbying from Captain James Roosevelt, son of the President, who had toured the Commandos whilst working for COI. In January 1942 Captain Roosevelt had submitted a proposal to Major-General Thomas Holcomb, Commandant of the Marine Corps, outlining ideas for a unit '"for purposes similar to the British Commandos and the Chinese Guerrillas".'[38] Although Holcomb had reservations based on a belief that any existent Marine unit could perform the proposed tasks, the scheme received obvious fillip when submitted to the President.[39]

Whilst not comparable to Churchill, President Franklin D. Roosevelt certainly held some natural inclination towards irregular warfare. During the First World War as Assistant Secretary of the Navy he was responsible for overseeing the Office of Naval Intelligence, and consequently, as Stafford has claimed, 'Roosevelt liked secrets'.[40] His willingness to appoint Donovan as COI (and later as head of OSS) and his enthusiasm about the Raiders is certainly representative of this. That his son's proposal also referenced the example of the Chinese guerrillas struck a further chord with the President in light of his meetings with Lieutenant-Colonel Evans F. Carlson. Carlson was Roosevelt's pre-war military observer in China who, having observed the Chinese

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[36] Lieutenant-Colonel T. Ely, Office of DCO to Major Daniell, War Office, 31 July 1941, WO 193/405
[37] Ladd, James, *Commandos and Rangers*, (MacDonald and Jane's: London, 1978) p.95
[38] Garrett, Richard, *The Raiders*, (David and Charles: Devon, 1980) p.204
[39] Mattingly, Robert E., *Herringbone Cloak – GI Dagger*, (USMC Command and Staff College, 1979)
[40] Stafford, David, *Roosevelt and Churchill*, (Abacus: London, 1999) p.3

guerrillas, had become 'convinced that guerrilla warfare was the wave of the future' and had discussed such matters with the President.[41]

Equally, if not more, important than the British example and Chinese lessons, however, were the pre-war USMC forays into 'rubber boat' companies. As early as 1940 General Holland M. Smith, commanding the 1st Marine Division, had experimented with such companies to conduct raids and diversions from APDs (fast destroyer transports) in Fleet Landing Exercises. By 1941 this concept had evolved and General Smith, now commanding the Amphibious Force Atlantic Fleet selected the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines to become an independent 'APD battalion' under Lieutenant-Colonel Merritt Edson. Following Pearl Harbor and Captain Roosevelt's suggestions, this Battalion was re-named the 1st Separate Battalion and a sister battalion was created using a proportion of its personnel as a nucleus. On 16 and 19 February 1942 respectively, the 1st and 2nd Separate Battalions were redesignated Raider Battalions.[42] Edson would command the 1st and Carlson the 2nd Battalion. James Roosevelt and Samuel Griffith II, who both had observed first-hand Commando training, became their executive officers.

The creation of the US Army's first specialist unit, the 1st Ranger Battalion, owes much more to the British model than did the Raiders. Their inception was a direct consequence of General Marshall's April 1942 visit to Britain. Following a tour of Whitehall Marshall began to view COHQ and Commando raids as an important mechanism for making a 'preliminary active front' of the continental European coastlines. Marshall believed that an attachment of American service personnel to COHQ would provide a solid means of gaining much needed combat and amphibious experience.[43] It was thus proposed that a small number of American soldiers undertake Commando training (akin to an arrangement with the USMC six months earlier), a proportion of whom could then be used to form the nucleus of an 'American Commando' whilst the remainder be returned to the US to serve as 'Commando instructors' who would train Army Ground Forces personnel in combined operations techniques. On the back of such suggestions, eight officers from the US Army, Navy

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[41] Hoffman, Jon T., *From Makin to Bougainville: Marine Raiders in the Pacific War*, (USMC Historical Centre: Washington, D. C., 1995)
[42] *Ibid.*
[43] Darby, William O. and Baumer, William H., *Darby's Rangers, We Led the Way*, (Ballantine: New York, 1980) p.3; Harrison, Gordon A., *Cross-Channel Attack,* (Department of the Army: Washington D.C., 1951) pp.15-16

and Marines under Colonel Lucian K. Truscott Jr., were attached to COHQ.[44] On 26 May 1942, having witnessed British developments, Truscott reported to the JCS that there should be an immediate formation of an 'American Commando' which, in light of earlier suggestions, was immediately agreed to.[45]

The 1st Ranger Battalion was thus activated on 19 June 1942, its ranks comprised 488 volunteers from personnel in USANIF. In line with the British approach, when forming the Rangers it was thought desirable to create an entirely new unit rather than risk destroying the operational integrity of an existing formation. Although the Rangers were to closely mirror the Commando model and come under the SS Brigade for 'training and tactical control', conscious efforts were made to retain the US military identity of the force as much as practical. It was made explicit that the US 34th Infantry Division would remain responsible for all administration and supply, and it was hoped that American equipment and tactical doctrines would be retained as much as practicable.[46]

Marshall's 1942 visit to Britain also laid the foundations for another specialist formation: the First Special Service Force (FSSF). When visiting COHQ Marshall had been introduced to a British scientist, Geoffrey Pyke, who had developed a plan for a special snow vehicle, codenamed 'Plough', which he believed specially trained personnel could use to raid vulnerable German possessions in Norway or other snow-covered theatres. As the 'Plough' would need to be developed in America, it was suggested to Marshall that the US Army might take responsibility for undertaking the scheme. Marshall was enthused and sent Lieutenant-Colonel Robert T. Frederick from the Operations Division of the General Staff to 'make a strategic assessment of the viability of the Plough mission'. Although this appreciation identified some limitations in the plan, Marshall remained keen and in June 1942 would place Frederick in charge of creating the FSSF.[47]

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[44] Major-General Chaney, Adjutant General to GOC, USANIF, 1 June 1942, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21066, Folder INBN-1-0; Black, Robert W., *Rangers in World War II*, (Ballantine: New York, 1992) p.3

[45] Truscott, Lieutenant-General Lucian King, Jr., *Command Missions*, (E.P. Dutton, 1954) p.38

[46] Black (1992), pp.8-9

[47] Burhans, Robert D., *The First Special Service Force*, (Infantry Journal Press: Washington D.C., 1947) pp.8-10; Adleman, Robert H., and Walton, George, *The Devil's Brigade*, (Corgi: London 1968) p.17

The FSSF was created as a joint American-Canadian formation. The Canadian contingent became involved partly from a desire to develop their own specialist capabilities, of which they provided no other example during the war, and partly because of the Canadian Army's suitability for training and operating in winter conditions.[48] Initial recruiting for the Force was, at least for the American contingent, fraught with problems. Whilst the Canadian 'half' comprised hand-picked and qualified volunteers, much of the initial American contingent comprised 'a collection of marginal types culled from stockades and unit rejects .... [who] were low on the scale of intelligence in the US Army'.[49] Frederick had to fight numerous bureaucratic battles to help rectify the situation, which arose principally because of a common reticence to release high-quality personnel from their regular units for indistinct purposes. Prescribed and heavily favoured by the British, yet executed in a joint manner by the US and Canada, the inception of the FSSF was, in both conception and composition, uniquely representative of an international effort.

Offspring of divergent military cultures and, potentially more significantly, born at different stages of the war, the motivation behind Britain's creation of the Commandos and America's adoption of the Rangers, and to a lesser extent the FSSF and Raiders, was notably different. The Commandos (the number of which consistently outnumbered ranger units) were raised at a time of strategic desperation and as such there was some gravitas behind their creation: they were viewed as an important striking arm that could help wrest back the strategic initiative. The various ranger-style formations, on the other hand, were conceived at a time when the strategic situation was, although still taxing, by no means as desperate as it had appeared in the summer of 1940. From the outset, the US Army Rangers were perceived as a transitory 'training and demonstration unit': as a means of providing employment and experience for a proportion of personnel before the brunt of conventional US forces had opportunity to fight in a style more synonymous with the American 'way of war'.[50]

The Ranger participation in the British raiding programme was in line with Marshall's initial intention: they served to be 'the first step in a program ... for giving actual battle

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[48] Dziuban, Colonel Stanley W., *Military Relations Between the United States and Canada 1939-1945*, (Department of the Army: Washington D.C., 1959) p.259
[49] Adleman and Walton, pp.44-46; Beaumont (1974), p.52
[50] Major-General Chaney to GOC, USANIF, 1 June 1942, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21066, Folder INBN-1-0

experience to the maximum number of personnel of the American Army.'[51] It is of no coincidence that the Ranger's inception coincided with Army Ground Forces establishment of its first Amphibious Training Centre at Camp Edwards, Massachusetts.[52]

Given the British influence on the creation of the US Army Rangers it is perhaps not surprising that their function and employment would closely follow the evolution of their British counterparts. The first operational deployment involving Ranger personnel, and the only time the 1st Rangers would serve in a raid, occurred when fifty Rangers took part, via attachment to various elements (predominantly No.3 Commando), in the Dieppe Raid. Even before the completion of their formal training, therefore, the Rangers had begun to emulate the Commando's transition towards spearheading roles. Had they not done this they may swiftly have become redundant. Operation 'Torch' would soon enable a much larger proportion of the US Army to gain practicable combat experience without the need for training and demonstration units.

For both the Commandos and Rangers Dieppe cut a role for future deployments and altered their inherent function; they began to be perceived, and used, as shock troops to tackle difficult tactical objectives for the furtherance of conventional operations, rather than serving as independent raiding specialists. The landing of Nos.1 and 6 Commandos 'at the head of the hunt' during operation 'Torch' was the first significant deployment of the Commandos in a landing where the objective was to stay ashore rather than withdraw.[53] Deployed in a spearheading capacity with the leading elements during the assault, the Commandos were not subsequently withdrawn and were instead retained for operations at the front. With few exceptions, such as operation 'Bizerte', No.1 Commando's 5 December 1942 attempt to turn the enemy's sea flank in support of 36th Infantry Brigade, the Commandos spent six months acting in a light-infantry capacity in the front lines.[54]

The first deployment of the 1st Ranger Battalion as a complete unit was also during the 'Torch' landings when they were tasked with neutralising the coastal artillery at Fort

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[51] HQ USANIF on 'Commando Organisation', 7 June 1942, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21066, Folder INBN-1-0
[52] Lewis, Adrian R., *Omaha Beach,* (University of North Carolina Press, 2001) p.70
[53] Lieutenant-General Alfrey, GOC V Corps to Nos.1 and 6 Commandos, April 1943, DEFE 2/43
[54] No.1 Commando War Diary, DEFE 2/37; Parker, John, *Commandos*, (Headline: London, 2000) p.130

de la Pointe guarding the harbour of Arzew.[55] Subsequent to the initial assault, however, the role of the Rangers became ill-defined and experienced 'the phenomena of "mission creep".'[56] After undertaking a number of more mundane activities, the Rangers were ultimately attached to the 1st Infantry Division under whom, like the Commandos, they would fight 'a dozen soldiers' battles'. Although the raid on Station de Sened and the seizure of the Djebel el Ank Pass emphasised their talents in night infiltration and assault, the commonest deployments of the 1st Rangers in North Africa were in a conventional infantry capacity.[57]

Despite operating against a different enemy in different operational environments, the employment of the USMC Raiders in the Pacific War would largely mirror the same process of evolution as the Commandos and Rangers were undergoing in Europe and North Africa. In light of the imprecise blend of Commando and Chinese guerrilla influences which had dominated their inception, the exact purpose for which the USMC Raiders had been created was somewhat unclear. The two initial battalions were each strongly influenced by their respective commanding officer's perspective as to what their function should be. Lieutenant-Colonel Evans Carlson's progressive ideas about guerrilla warfare and devolved leadership for the 2nd Battalion were at odds with Lieutenant-Colonel Merritt Edson's more conventional methods for the 1st Battalion, and went some way to ensure that although the 'battalions bore the same name … they could hardly have been more dissimilar.'[58] The 1st and 2nd Raider Battalions were first deployed, independent of one another, in August 1942. On 7 August, with clear parallels to the commando role emerging in Europe, the 1st Battalion attacked Tulagi spearheading the first US amphibious landings of the war.[59] Ten days later, the 2nd Battalion raided Makin atoll via submarines with an aim of destroying the garrison, gaining intelligence, and drawing Japanese attentions away from Guadalcanal.[60]

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[55] Lieutenant-Colonel Darby to Adjutant General, 1 January 1943, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21066, Folder INBN-1-0

[56] Stewart, Jeff R., 'The Ranger Force at the Battle of Cisterna', Thesis, Fort Leavenworth: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2004, p.17; King, Michael J., 'Rangers: Selected Combat Operations in World War II', *Leavenworth Papers*, No.11, June 1985, (US Army Command and General Staff College) p.14

[57] Lieutenant-Colonel Darby to Adjutant General, 4 March 1943, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21066, Folder INBN-1-0; Darby and Baumer, p.67

[58] Hoffman (1995)

[59] Brigadier W.H. Rupertus, Assistant Divisional Commander to GOC, 1st Marine Division, 29 September 1942, RG 127, USMC Geographic Files, Guadalcanal, Box 40; Folder: 1st Marine Division, Tulagi

[60] C-in-C Pacific Fleet to C-in-C US Fleet, 20 October 1942, RG 127, USMC Geographic Files, Makin, Box 183

Although the raid to an extent would prove the validity of the raiding and scouting concepts that Carlson had been expounding for his unit, the operation itself was beset with problems brought about by poor intelligence and general inexperience (bearing clear parallels to the limitations of early British raids). Makin would remain the only operation of its type undertaken in the Pacific War.[61]

Following these operations, both Battalions, one after the other, were deployed to Guadalcanal. There, both the 1st Battalion's 'copy-book hit-and-run' amphibious raid against Tasimboko village of 8 September 1942,[62] and the 2nd Battalion's landing and protracted long range patrol near Aloa Bay throughout November, illustrated the Raider potential in specialist deployments.[63] Their far more common deployments, however, akin to the use of Rangers and Commandos in North Africa, were conventional infantry tasks. Although in numerous aggressive patrols, and in actions such as the defence of 'Edson's Ridge' in September 1942, the Raiders performed admirably, Lieutenant-General Thomas Holcomb would echo the sentiments of many Raider critics when he stated that 'such tasks could just as well be performed by any marine rifle battalion'.[64] Tulagi, Makin and Guadalcanal had, nevertheless, highlighted the potential versatility and value of the Raiders which were subsequently expanded with the creation of the 3rd and 4th Battalions in Samoa and California, respectively.

The European-orientated Commandos and Rangers were also expanding and facing reorganisation at this time. The deployment these units faced in North Africa had broadly overstretched their establishments. As light-infantry forces, they lacked the firepower, transport, medical, and logistical facilities to deal with protracted operations, and suffered accordingly. Despite the difficulties experienced, these North African deployments cemented the commando and ranger transition in role as it became clear both that 'raiding for the sake of raiding was unlikely to be undertaken' and that 'Commandos must be prepared to carry out a role as specialised and highly trained infantry, possibly for protracted operations.'[65] In preparation for future

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[61] USMC Historical Branch Accounts of the Makin Raid, RG 127, Entry 46B, Box 100
[62] Captain Harry L. Torgerson, USMC Parachute Battalion, Report on Tasimbako Raid, RG 127, USMC Geographic Files, Guadalcanal, Box 44; Folder A36-1; Macksey, Kenneth, *Commando Strike*, (Leo Cooper: London, 1985) p.120
[63] Lieutenant-Colonel Carlson to GOC I Amphibious Corps, RG 127, USMC Geographic Files, Guadalcanal, Box 44; Folder A39-1
[64] Isely and Crowl, p.155
[65] Minutes of Fourth Commanding Officers' Conference at SS Brigade Headquarters, 15 January 1943, File 24, KCLMA Laycock

deployments steps were undertaken to reorganise the Commandos on more regular lines so as to render them 'capable of taking part in operations subsequent to the assault'.[66] The Commandos were thus grouped into four SS Brigades to make them 'administratively as well as operationally self-contained'; their establishment received an increase in support weaponry and transport 'to enable commandos to remain in contact with the enemy during daylight and after surprise has been lost'; and a 'holding commando' was established to help alleviate the significant problems with reinforcement following casualties.[67]

North Africa had similarly demonstrated the potential of the US Army Rangers in both the initial assault and in post-landing operations. The Rangers became viewed as highly-trained 'all-around infantrymen'.[68] Such was their perceived value that it was decided to expand the concept, and in early-1943 the 3rd and 4th Ranger Battalions were raised by taking a nucleus of 1st Ranger personnel and bulking them up with recruits taken from US personnel in North Africa. Their creation was, however, in no way illustrative of a fundamental shift in the US Army's attitude towards these units. Despite the ever-growing opportunity for conventional formations to gain combat experience, these new Battalions were still created with the expectation of being able to act as a training vehicle. As Marshall signalled Eisenhower upon their creation: '.... after need for these battalions is passed personnel therein might be returned to parent organisations so that personnel might attain highest rating commensurate with proven ability'.[69]

As with the Commandos, following North Africa Darby became convinced that the Rangers had to develop a greater capacity to operate in a conventional infantry role. With a background as an artillery officer Darby had a 'fetish for firepower' and he gradually undertook measures to transform the Rangers 'into a light combined arms team.' Prior to Sicily mortars of the 83rd Chemical Warfare Battalion were attached to the Rangers in what was to become a permanent arrangement, and later, for the invasion of Italy, Darby introduced a 'cannon company' to Ranger Force comprising

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[66] Lieutenant-Colonel Macdonald, War Office to COSSAC Operations Branch, 4 June 1943, WO 106/4158

[67] CCO, 'Note on reorganisation of Commandos', March 1943, WO 32/10416; Brigadier Laycock on Reorganisation of SS Brigade, 1 April 1943, DEFE 2/1051

[68] Darby and Baumer, p.94

[69] General Marshall to General Eisenhower, 19 April 1943, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21066, Folder INBN-1-0

four 75mm guns mounted on halftracks.[70] Such tactical concessions were, however, the limit of Darby's powers to reorganise the Rangers and, despite lobbying, he was not authorised to instigate any more significant changes akin to those which Laycock and Mountbatten were making to the Commandos. The Ranger establishment was to remain firmly provisional.

Tasked with securing defensive batteries overlooking the main landing beaches, the missions for Nos.3, 40(RM) and 41(RM) Commandos during the invasion of Sicily certainly had a 'familiar ring' about them.[71] Having helped to secure the beachhead, on 14 July No.3 Commando participated in a costly amphibious 'right hook' to secure the Ponte di Malati Bridge in conjunction with airborne forces. Aside from this action, and quite unlike events in North Africa (and many future landings), the Commandos were subsequently swiftly withdrawn from the line to prepare for forthcoming operations against Italy.[72] The Rangers were similarly employed during the Sicilian assault: the 1st and 4th Battalions spearheaded the landings at Gela to secure the coastal defences whilst the 3rd Rangers attacked beach defences at San Mollarella.[73] After these actions it was initially hoped that the Rangers would help further the offensive, but neither the 1st nor 4th Rangers could keep pace with Patton's 'reconnaissance in force' and thus their time was spent undertaking marginal tasks before they too were withdrawn in readiness for the invasion of the Italian mainland. Amongst all of the commandos and rangers in Sicily, the employment of the 3rd Rangers was something of an exception: continuing to keep pace with Truscott's 3rd Infantry Division they were widely deployed in frontline duties and would be amongst the first units to reach Messina.

Sicily had further reinforced to both Britain and the US the potential value of commandos and rangers in supporting and hastening amphibious assaults. With the invasion of France on the horizon these units were thus placed at a premium and it was deemed advisable to expand the number of such formations to cater for future landings.[74] For the British, the most obvious manner of facilitating this expansion was to authorise the direct conversion of Royal Marine battalions into seven additional

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[70] King, pp.2-3; 13
[71] Ladd (1978), p.129
[72] Brigadier Laycock to Major-General Haydon, 8 August 1943, File 23 in KCLMA Laycock
[73] Lieutenant-Colonel Darby, Field Order No.1, 1 July 1943, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21071; Folder INBN-1-3.9; Major Herman W. Dammer, CO 3rd Ranger Battalion to Adjutant General, 31 July 1942, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21074; Folder INBN-3-0.3
[74] War Office memorandum, 'Points brought out in Ops. "Husky"', WO 201/799

Royal Marine Commandos (to join the two already in existence). This was a move that initially brought much resentment from the all-volunteer Army Commandos who believed 'that units of conscripted marines could not be expected to maintain the high Commando standards'.[75] Such animosity was, however, short-lived and was gradually suppressed by the sensible grouping of Royal Marine and Army Commandos together in the same SS Brigades, a move that would foster mutual respect and *esprit de corps*.

Observing the 'Husky' landings Brigadier-General Norman D. Cota, USA echoed the sentiments of the British and singled out the importance of 'improved Ranger Activities' in the success of the assault and deemed Rangers 'vitally necessary' for future landings. Cota went on to recommend that further Ranger battalions be raised 'at least two per "assault division" .... without delay' for 'Overlord'.[76] Unlike with the British, however, this request was met with a 'cold reception' from Army Ground Forces which still viewed the Rangers as transient expedients that were contradictory to the favoured mobilisation of large numbers of homogenous conventional formations. Rangers were recognised as valuable for the assault but not for subsequent roles.[77] It was only following concerted pressure from ETOUSA, and particularly the likes of Cota who had worked with COHQ, that the formation of the 2nd and 5th Ranger Battalions at Camp Forrest, Tennessee in April and September 1943 respectively was grudgingly accepted.[78]

Following Sicily 'the war had ... reached a stage where raiding was nearly finished with. .... There might still be small-scale reconnaissance raids, but there would be no more Vaagso's or Dieppe's'.[79] Laycock predicted that: 'Such raids as do take place are likely to be on a larger scale, of long duration and of immediate strategic importance'.[80] Instead of conducting 'hit-and-run' raiding operations or even spearhead operations, where withdrawal was possible, the Commandos would, with the commencement of offensive overland operations, be increasingly called upon to undertake more protracted employment. Their 'hit-and-run' repertoire was gradually

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[75] Durnford-Slater, p.171
[76] Brigadier-General Norman D. Cota, COHQ G-3, 'Observation of Operation HUSKY', August 1943, RG 165, Entry 418, Box 1249; Folder OPD 381 ETO (Section V) Cases 108-137; Cota to GOC ETOUSA, 10 August 1943, RG 407 Entry 427, Box 24157; Folder 534
[77] Darby to General Eisenhower, 10 August 1943, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21066; Folder INBN-1-0
[78] Hogan, David W. Jr., *Raiders or Elite Infantry?*, (Greenwood Press: London, 1992) p.37
[79] Durnford-Slater, p.171
[80] Brigadier Robert Laycock, OC SS Brigade, paper on the Reorganisation of SS Brigade, 1st April 1943, DEFE 2/1051

being replaced by 'hit-and-hold' or 'bite-and-hold' operations. For the invasion of Italy the 1st, 3rd and 4th Ranger battalions (which illuminatingly, in August 1943, had been formally redesignated Ranger *Infantry* Battalions) were deployed at Salerno alongside Nos.2 and 41(RM) Commandos to protect the flanks of X Corps. After spearheading the initial landings, these units held the flanks for twenty-one days before being relieved. Salerno is illustrative of the consistent problems with this form of deployment for both the Commandos and the Rangers. Despite changes to their establishments, these light-infantry forces could never hope to emulate the organisation and firepower of conventional forces.[81] For as Darby wrote: 'All my soldiers were rugged raiders, but we lacked enough artillery for a full-scale defence. We were equipped to hit and run but not to stick it out in a slogging match against forces armed with medium and heavy artillery outnumbering us at least eight to one'.[82]

The transition to 'bite-and-hold' is perhaps best illustrated by operation 'Devon', the 3 October 1943 landing of Nos.3 and 40(RM) Commandos and the Special Raiding Squadron (a lineal descendant of the 1st SAS Regiment which at this time was deployed in a Commando capacity) at Termoli to outflank the German lines. There, the Commandos independently took the town and doggedly held it for three days against repeated counterattacks with the minimum of support until eventually being relieved by 78th Division's coastal drive.[83] 'Devon', in the opinion of General Thompson, was a 'classic example of employing commandos'.[84] In Italy, as in North Africa, the Commandos also undertook a number of more protracted, less specialised, deployments that saw them operate in a manner more akin to conventional infantry battalions. A fine illustration of such a deployment is the five-weeks that No.40(RM) Commando spent on the line at the Garigliano River.

Despite their limitations when deployed in protracted defensive operations without support, by 1944 Commando-style formations were, nevertheless, 'fully prepared to undertake any normal infantry tasks'.[85] Completely comprehending their evolving role, many Commandos thus undertook measures to adapt and prepare for such tasks. In February 1944, for example, Colonel Tod, CO No.9 Commando, actually requested

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[81] Hogan, *US Army*, p.23
[82] Darby and Baumer, pp.140-141
[83] Report on operations of SS Brigade in Termoli, October 1943, WO 204/7222; also WO 204/8277
[84] Thompson (1998), p.275
[85] 21 Army Group Staff Study No.8 'Employment of Commandos and Rangers', 27 December 1943, RG 331, Entry 199, Box 32; Folder 322 Rangers

that his men each spend time in the line before future deployments to give them 'time to appreciate the nature of the tasks before them, learn the working and routine organisation of life in the line, and become accustomed to working with other units in the Field Army'.[86] Despite a gradual acceptance of more conventional activities it remained clear that the best advantage offered by commandos was to utilise them as elite spearhead and shock troops in amphibious operations; deployments over difficult country; night time operations; and operations requiring the elimination or capture of specific objectives such as forts, bridges, roads, and coastal defence positions. The expansion of both Commando and Ranger programmes in preparation for the invasion of France epitomises the value attributed to these formations in such roles.

Joining the Commandos and Rangers in Italy at this time was the FSSF. The FSSF's unique intended role of conducting protracted operations and raids against Norway had been put aside within six months of their inception. The Force had faced intractable problems with both the readiness of the 'Plough' and with political disputes with the Norwegian government-in-exile over the destruction of industry.[87] Absence of a clear role prompted the FSSF to supplement its already accomplished arctic warfare expertise with a training schedule which included both parachuting and amphibious techniques. In the opinion of McMichael, the training programme 'in terms of intensity, difficulty, variety, and scope, far surpassed that experienced by any other regiment or division in the US Army during the war'.[88] With no opportunity to deploy against Norway, the Force was first used in August 1943 in a 'traditional' commando spearhead capacity during the unopposed assault on Kiska in the Aleutians. Following this brief deployment, the Force was offered to various Theatre Commanders in the hope of attaining more permanent employment.[89] Two potential suitors for the Force emerged: deployment with Fifth Army in Italy, with an aim to utilise the Force's unique skills in the Apennines; or, as requested by General Wilson, C-in-C ME, and deployment along the Dalmatian coast to serve alongside partisans in a guerrilla capacity.[90] The divergence between these two potential deployments highlights both

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[86] 'History of the Commandos in the Mediterranean, September 1943 to May 1945', DEFE 2/700
[87] Minutes from COS Committee Meetings, 17 and 25 November 1942, WO 193/74 and DEFE 2/4
[88] McMichael, p.172
[89] Major-General Lowell W. Rooks, assistant Chief of Staff G-3 Section, AFHQ to Chief of Staff, 3 September 1943, WO 204/1532
[90] General Wilson to AFHQ, 10 September 1943, WO 204/1532; Various documents in RG 218, Records of the JCS, Geographical File 1942-45, Box 158, Folder 381 Norway

the indistinctness of the Force's role and the expected versatility of the Force's capabilities.

Ultimately it would be operational necessity, particularly General Mark Clark's shortage of personnel, which forced the decision and saw the FSSF deployed to Italy where it was hoped that the unit could 'provide extremely valuable leavening for normal divisions' and make up for a general deficiency in knowledge about fighting in mountainous and winter conditions.[91] Upon their arrival in Italy the Force was swiftly put to use. In December 1943 it was tasked with taking, by night time infiltration/assault, the peaks of Monte la Difensa and Monte la Remetanea, key positions in Field-Marshal Kesselring's 'Winter Wall'. The assignment was, in the opinion of McMichael, 'fully suited to the FSSF' taking advantage of their 'special training in night fighting, mountain climbing, cold weather, and lightning assault'.[92] Though a difficult proposition, such operations were, nevertheless, of the shock troop variety and once the peaks had been taken they had to be held, actions that precipitated a costly period of protracted mainline deployment.[93]

Anzio would be the next notable deployment for both the US Army Rangers and the FSSF. During the Anzio landings both the 1st, 3rd and 4th Rangers and Nos.9 and 43(RM) Commandos were used in the initial assault. The Commandos, which were used 'almost as an afterthought' as a blocking force for the landings, were, as at Sicily, swiftly withdrawn from the beachhead after only three days (two Commandos would later return to the beachhead to help hold its left flank once it became threatened).[94] The Rangers, however, were not relieved after the initial landings, and were used both to expand the beachhead and, subsequently to help hold the line against enemy counterattacks. It was here that the mismatch between Ranger capabilities and application would have disastrous consequences. On 31 January 1944 the 1st and 3rd Rangers attempted to infiltrate enemy lines to seize the town of Cisterna, held unbeknownst to them in light of inadequate intelligence, by a superior, strongly fortified and alert enemy force. At Cisterna 'the odds of such misemployment caught

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[91] AGWAR to Combined Chiefs of Staff, 7 September 1943, WO 204/1532; Lieutenant-Colonel T.J. Conway, G-3 Plans AFHQ, Memorandum on deployment of 'Plough Force', 4 October 1943, WO 204/1532

[92] McMichael, p.184-185

[93] Within its first month of deployment the Force sustained 1,400 casualties (out of a combatant strength of 1,800 men). Adleman and Walton, p.136

[94] 'History of the Commandos in the Mediterranean, September 1943 to May 1945', DEFE 2/700

up with Darby's force' and the two battalions were encircled and decimated.[95] The 4th Rangers, although avoiding this battle, were absorbed in protracted deployments alongside the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment and the FSSF, and in March 1944, having sustained heavy casualties, were disbanded with a proportion of its personnel retained as reinforcements for the FSSF.[96]

Such was the stock of the FSSF following Monte la Difensa that at Anzio they were given responsibility for an eight-mile frontage, representing over one quarter of the entire beachhead and double that held by the 3rd Infantry Division (albeit across a frontage unsuited to mobile operations and thus unlikely to be directly counterattacked).[97] During this period in the line the Force performed effectively, masking its numerical inferiority by consistently maintaining aggressive night-time fighting patrols along the Mussolini Canal.[98] In preparation for the Anzio breakout, Colonel Frederick had prepared his unit for 'mobile operations in conjunction with tanks'.[99] It was a prudent move, and in the subsequent drive on Rome the FSSF formed part of the conventional task force leading the advance and, having captured key bridges *en route*, would be amongst the first units to arrive in the city.[100]

Solid illustration of the ultimate evolution of commando roles is provided by employment of these units during the invasion of France and in the subsequent campaign across Northwest Europe. During the D-Day invasion both the 1st and 4th SS Brigades deployed in a classic spearhead manner acting against specific points of resistance to hasten the formation of the beachhead. Unlike many other landings, the Commandos at Normandy did not land first: instead, the SS Brigades landed just behind the leading assault waves (No.46(RM) Commando actually landing on D+1). The Commandos of the 1st SS Brigade were tasked with helping to secure Oiustreham

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[95] Ranger Force (Provisional) Field Order No.2, 29 January 1944, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21067; Folder INBN-1-0.3; Beaumont (1974), p.50. For an assessment of the Rangers at Cisterna, see: Stewart, 'Ranger Force at the Battle of Cisterna'.

[96] Lieutenant-Colonel Roy A. Murray, Jr., CO 4th Ranger Battalion, Report of Action for March 1944, 26 March 1944, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21075; Folder INBN-4-0.1

[97] Springer, Joseph A., *The Black Devil Brigade*, (ibooks, inc.: New York, 2001)p.142

[98] Misleadingly Adleman and Walton have asserted that in such deployments the Force operated 'as guerrillas'. This was not the case, the FSSF were only undertaking those activities, albeit with great flair, regularly performed by conventional infantry units to gather intelligence and gain the moral ascendancy. Adleman and Walton, p.162

[99] Hogan, *Raiders*, p.61

[100] Summary of FSSF operations 1-30 June 1944, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 23274; Folder SSFE-1-0.3

and linking-up with the 6th Airborne Division to anchor the left flank of the invasion.[101] The Commandos of 4th SS Brigade would join them on this flank after having, for the first hours of the invasion, operated independently against individual points of resistance. Perhaps the most difficult task fell to No.47(RM) Commando, who were to capture Port-en-Bessin and link up with US formations moving east from 'Omaha'. After the initial assault, despite some premature predictions that they would be withdrawn to the UK to reorganise and refit, both Brigades were deployed on the line in conventional tasks until the build up reached a stage where their withdrawal was feasible.[102] This occurred only after the SS Brigades had spent 83 days in contact with the enemy, more time than any other British formation.[103]

On D-Day the 2nd and 5th Ranger Battalions were deployed in an archetypal spearhead and flankguard capacity. In the planning stage of the 'Neptune' landings the guns at Pointe du Hoc were singled out as the only objective 'which is both suitable for a Commando or Ranger task and also vital to the Operation'.[104] The assault on these cliff-top defences by elements of the 2nd Rangers remains illustrative of a model application of ranger formations in support of an amphibious landing.[105] The remainder of the 2nd Rangers landed with the 5th Rangers amongst the early waves at 'Omaha' beach in what Michael King considered their 'most authentic' operation of the war.[106] The D-day assault was the *raison d'être* of the 2nd and 5th Rangers and its successful completion created a void for further Ranger employment. Following the initial assault Colonel Rudder, CO of the 2nd Rangers, petitioned for his command to be returned to Britain, be reinforced, and be withheld for future specialist deployments.[107] His lobbying was, however, unsuccessful, and like the Commandos (and many parachute and gilder-borne troops that took part in the initial assault) the Rangers were retained at the front for more conventional tasks.

During the drive on Germany the Commando virtuosity in spearheading tasks made the obvious transition to overland infiltration and assault. The effectiveness of the

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[101] 1st SS Brigade War Diary, DEFE 2/53
[102] Major-General de Guingand, Chief of Staff 21 Army Group to SHAEF, 7 June 1944, WO 205/136
[103] Thompson (2000), p.341
[104] 21 Army Group Staff Study No.8 'Employment of Commandos and Rangers', 27 December 1943, RG 331, Entry 199, Box 32; Folder 322 Rangers
[105] US War Department, *Small Unit Actions*, (US Army: Washington, D.C., 1991) pp.1-63
[106] King, p.52
[107] Hogan, *US Army*, p.43

Commandos in such tasks is well illustrated by their advances across the flooded terrain of the lowlands; the 4th SS Brigade's November 1944 attack on Walcheren; the March 1945 crossing of the Rhine, operation 'Widgeon', in which the 1st Commando Brigade (as the SS Brigades were renamed in December 1944) attacked and held the town of Wesel; or operation 'Enterprise', the seizure of bridges over the Elbe in April 1945.[108] After their D-Day tasks had been accomplished the Rangers had a brief period out of the line for reinforcement and were then deployed in a largely conventional manner in the reduction of Brest, and subsequently in the advance towards Germany.[109] Like their Commando counterparts, however, the Ranger Battalions were still called upon, albeit more infrequently, to supplement these more conventional deployments with shock troop roles to tackle difficult objectives. The 2nd Ranger Battalion taking and holding Hill 400, 'Castle Hill', near Bergstein in December 1944 provides good example of such a role;[110] as does the 5th Rangers' costly four kilometre infiltration to capture and hold the Irsch-Zerf road for nine days in February 1945.[111]

Two months after the invasion of Normandy, the FSSF participated in the 'Anvil/Dragoon' landings against the South of France. During the initial assault the Force was used in a commando spearheading capacity to seize the German coastal batteries on Ile du Levant and Ile de Port Cros on the left flank of the invasion beaches.[112] They were not, however, used in the main landings and were not deployed on mainland France until breakout had occurred. The subsequent deployment of the Force during 'Champagne campaign' was very conventional and more of 'an extended route march than a battle'.[113] In December 1944, in a climate where the majority of other commando and ranger formations were being deployed conventionally, the FSSF was disbanded. Lack of a clear role, increasing headaches over the multi-national composition of the unit, and a general manpower shortage all contrived to give this step certain inevitability.

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[108] 1st Commando Brigade Operation Orders, March-April 1945, DEFE 2/53; Samain, Bryan, *Commando Men*, (Pen & Sword: Barnsley, 2005) p.138
[109] 'Lead the Way, Rangers', A History of the Fifth Ranger Battalion by Henry S. Glassman, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21076; Folder INBN-5-0 p.38
[110] 'A Narrative History of the Second Ranger Infantry Battalion, 1944', RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21072; Folder 23745, INBN-2-0.3, Ch.8, p.3
[111] 'Lead the Way, Rangers', RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21076; Folder INBN-5-0 pp.56-57
[112] FSSF Summary of Operations, August 1944, RG 338, Entry 37042, Box 459
[113] Hogan, *US Army*, p.28; FSSF Summary of Operations, October 1944, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 23275; Folder SSFE-1-0.3

From late-1942 a common pattern for the employment of commandos and rangers in the European theatres had been established which saw their primary occupation evolving from independent raiding towards spearhead and shock troop roles alongside greater participation in the main battle. This pattern was not, however, entirely uniform and throughout the war a number of Commandos, both individually and in brigades, continued to undertake independent specialised deployments more analogous to their original concept. The theatre of operation in which these units operated would, unsurprisingly, have ramifications for their employment. Operating in Italy and the Adriatic 2nd SS Brigade (comprised Nos.2, 9, 40(RM) and 43(RM) Commandos) undertook a diverse range of operations that, alongside more protracted conventional deployments, included numerous raids and independent actions. Their operations from the island of Vis against the Dalmatian coast and later tasks in Albania and Greece in close coordination with special forces and partisans, in particular, were representative of a distinctly different manner of deployment from those that the Brigade performed on the Italian mainland. In the opinion of one Commando officer, the Balkans offered a 'setting for true Commando operations [which] couldn't have been bettered'; such periphery theatres permitted Commandos to be deployed, almost as originally intended, to raid coastlines and support indigenous partisan forces with the goal of tying down disproportionate numbers of enemy manpower and material.[114]

The Commandos of the 3rd SS Brigade (Nos.1, 5, 42(RM), and 44(RM) Commandos) sent for deployment in the Far East from January 1944 similarly undertook, albeit sporadically, a more diverse set of operations than their comrades employed in Northwest Europe. The Arakan coastline and the numerous rivers in the Burma theatre offered the potential both for coastal raiding as well as spearheading projected amphibious assaults and river crossings.[115] Even with these more apposite conditions, however, there could be definite commonality between the use of these Commandos and those formations deployed in Europe. The January 1945 operations conducted in support of the 25th Indian Division against the Mybon Peninsula, for example, have clear parallels. Of particular note, and illustrative of their shock troop role, was Nos.1 and 5 Commandos' critical seizure and holding of Hill 170 near Kangaw in January

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[114] Memoirs of Captain J.E.C. Nicholl, IWM Nicholl 78/43/1; p.186; 'History of the Commandos in the Mediterranean, September 1943 to May 1945', DEFE 2/700; also various documents in WO 204/1527

[115] Joint Planning Staff report on 'Employment of Commandos', January 1945, WO 203/2102; HQ 3rd SS Brigade War Diary, DEFE 2/53

1945, an action bearing considerable similarities to the 2nd Ranger's seizure of 'Castle Hill' in the Hurtgen campaign one month earlier.[116]

In addition to these aforementioned 'regular' establishment Commandos serving under the SS Brigade organisation, a number of other Commandos existed which, possessing unique establishments or operational responsibilities, would to an extent eschew the broader pattern of evolution as affecting these units. One such unit was No.10(Inter-Allied) Commando. Raised in June 1942, it comprised foreign nationals: French, Belgian, Dutch, Norwegian, Polish, Yugoslav and 'X troop' (later known as No.3 'Miscellaneous' Troop) comprised enemy aliens. Never intended to deploy as a complete unit, the personnel of the Commando would be attached, either as individuals or troops, to other formations, specialist and otherwise, for deployment. Personnel of the Commando were thus employed in a wide variety of tasks, taking part in both numerous raids such as Bruneval, St. Nazaire and Dieppe, as well as in conventional operations in Italy, France and Holland.[117]

No.12 Commando had been raised from Irish and Welsh regiments with the intention of being a 'normal' Commando but, experiencing difficulties coming up to establishment, it was retained outside of the SS Brigade organisation and placed directly under COHQ for special duties. In its deployments No.12 Commando was unusually malleable and throughout 1941-44 would continue to undertake various small-scale raids within the original Commando mandate at a time when the majority of other Commandos were in the process of making the transition to more conventional deployments.[118] In late-1943 No.12 Commando and the French and 'Miscellaneous' Troops of No.10(IA) Commando were grouped together as 'Layforce II' under Major P. Laycock (son of Robert Laycock, CCO) and assigned responsibility for undertaking the majority of the 'Hardtack' reconnaissances and 'Manacle' (or 'Candlestick') raids proposed to be undertaken against the Channel coast prior to D-Day. Because of security concerns, the main purpose of such operations was deceptive: to indicate other landing sites, test general defensive readiness and draw attention away from

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[116] No.1 Commando War Diary, DEFE 2/37; Colonel Peter Young, 'The Battle for 170', 11 February 1945, WO 203/1792

[117] Historical summary of No.10(IA) Commando, May 1946, DEFE 2/780; History of No.3 Troop No.10(IA) Commando, 25 April 1946, DEFE 2/977

[118] Examples of which are 'Chess' a reconnaissance raid near Ambleteuse in July 1941 or 'Anklet' a December 1941 diversionary action for the larger 'Archery' raid against Vaagso. See reports in DEFE 2/45 and WO 106/4116

clandestine reconnaissance activities. In the event, however, the majority of such operations would be aborted as a result of unsuitable weather conditions.[119] Shortly before D-Day No.12 Commando was disbanded as surplus to requirement; the commencement of continental operations made small-scale coastal raiding unnecessary and to have altered No.12 Commando's understrength establishment to deal with the rigours of more conventional deployments would have been a difficult and unwarranted course of action.

No.14 Commando was raised in November 1942 with the intention of becoming an 'Arctic Commando' for deployment against Norway.[120] With an establishment of only two troops, the Commando had an international makeup, with personnel coming from the Royal Navy, the Canadian Army and a select number of Norwegians all chosen for their 'experience in mountain or snow conditions or for their knowledge of canoeing'.[121] The first troop of the Commando was a 'Boating Troop' intended to operate, somewhat redundantly, in a manner analogous to existent maritime special forces. Its establishment was fraught with a number of intractable problems, as Captain Croft, commanding, was to claim: 'never in my life have I met a set-up more conducive to failure.... [we] were not exactly a cohesive, well adjusted marine unit, which our dangerous mission really demanded, and none of the men had any battle experience at all'.[122] Problems of 'differences in languages, outlook and rates of pay' ensured it was 'impossible to foster a proper esprit de corps' and in February 1943 the troop was disbanded with its personnel being amalgamated into No.12 Commando. No.14 Commando's second troop was conceived to be a 'ski troop' with a mandate not dissimilar to that of the significantly larger FSSF. Like the FSSF, however, this troop would never deploy as initially intended and in mid-1943 it was disbanded with the remainder of its personnel joining the Lovat Scouts training in Canada for winter operations.[123]

No.30 (Assault) Commando (for a time known as the 'Special Engineering Unit') bore few similarities to the other Army and Royal Marine Commandos, being notably

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[119] See operational reports in DEFE 2/57; WO 106/4290; and RG 331, Entry 12, Box 14; Folder SHAEF/6RX/INT

[120] Brief on 'Arctic Commandos' for CCO, 25 November 1942, DEFE 2/4

[121] No.14 Commando War Diary, DEFE 2/45

[122] Unpublished memoir of Colonel N.A.C. Croft, IWM Croft 03/54/1, p.136

[123] Minutes of meeting on 'Future of 14 Commando and other small forces', 22 February 1943, DEFE 2/742; Melville, M. Leslie, *The Story of the Lovat Scouts 1900-1980*, (St Andrews Press: Edinburgh, 1981) p.84

different in size, composition and role.[124] Formed in August 1942 at the recommendations the DNI's personal assistant, Commander Ian Fleming, the unit was intended to mimic the operations that the German *Abwehrkommando* had employed in Yugoslavia and Greece.[125] Operating closely with the DNI the unit was to act as an 'intelligence assault unit' to be 'employed both before a landing and, in a tactical role in conjunction with the first assault, going for enemy Headquarters and attempting to obtain enemy cyphers [*sic*], equipment, instruments, papers, or other intelligence data as required.'[126] In addition to this 'authorised looting' the unit would carry out demolition and counter-demolition operations ahead of the main advance as well as protecting 'white list' VIPs.[127] No.30 Commando was divided into three troops, one each from the Army, Royal Marines and the Royal Navy. Personnel of which first deployed during operation 'Torch' and subsequently saw action in Sicily, Italy, the Aegean and on the Dalmatian coast. Prior to 'Overlord' the Royal Marine element was reorganised as 30 Assault Unit [30AU] which, in close coordination with their DNI counterparts, continued to operate with advancing Allied formations until the end of the war.[128]

Despite the above exceptions, the majority of commando formations followed a pronounced trend which saw their role evolve away from the conduct of independent raiding and related enterprises and move closer towards more conventional 'shock troop' occupations. This pattern, seen with both the Commandos and US Army Rangers, was also apparent with the other US light-infantry modelled specialist formations.

As contrasted to the war in Europe, the war against Japan would ultimately promote somewhat different experiences for the application of ranger formations. The initial employment of the USMC Raiders following Guadalcanal was, however, broadly

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[124] Elements of No.30 Commando occasionally undertook roles that were bore much greater similarities to the various special forces units. In February 1945, for example, personnel of 34(Army) Troop operated with partisans in protracted behind-the-lines operations in Italy. Nutting, David (ed.), *Attain by Surprise – The Story of 30 Assault Unit*, (David Colver: Chichester, 1997)
[125] Lieutenant-Commander Glanville, History of No.30 Commando, 1947, ADM 223/214
[126] GOC SS Group paper on administration of SBU, 28 October 1943, DEFE 2/1035
[127] Nutting, p.15; Lieutenant-Commander Riley, Intelligence Division, SACSEA to BGS(I) 11 Army Group, 26 August 1944, KCLMA Riley; Memorandum on Special Engineering Unit 'Objects and Possibilities', 4 November 1943, DEFE 2/742
[128] In addition to the aforementioned units there were also the Royal Navy Commandos (later Naval Beach Control Parties) which acted as beachmasters during amphibious assaults, and the RAF Servicing Commandos which had the role of servicing newly captured airfields. Nomenclature aside, these units were quite distinct from other specialist formations. Messenger, p.139

conformist to the same pattern as witnessed in Europe: the four Battalions were widely employed in both an amphibious spearhead capacity (as against the Russell islands in February 1943 or against Bougainville in November 1943) and in more protracted conventional infantry tasks (as on New Georgia).[129] Whilst the Raiders' unconventional attitude and training generally served them well, the Pacific War was gradually outpacing opportunities for their deployment. The series of 'island hopping' campaigns emerging would certainly call for great amphibious virtuosity but the nature of the small islands and atolls; the huge distances between the chains; and the heavily fortified enemy who expected to fight to the last man, simply did not offer specialist forces the opportunity to independently raid and harass. Whilst in the European and Mediterranean theatres commando and ranger formations fitted well into an Anglo-centric amphibious doctrine that placed a premium on speed and surprise; in Pacific theatre, on the other hand, the firepower-focused doctrine of the USMC and US Navy was found to be largely incompatible with the application of Raider formations.

The strategic realities of the Pacific War transpired to degrade the Raider role, whose lack of firepower, mobility and an inability to sustain losses could not be offset by training and *esprit de corps* alone.[130] Following deployment on Guadalcanal, Carlson had recommended that: 'our military units must be mobile, flexible, persistently aggressive, clever and must possess as much fire power as is commensurate with mobility'.[131] By emphasising mobility, flexibility, and a continued light-infantry role, Carlson was effectively shunning the conventionalisation in establishment that both Darby's Rangers and the Commandos had undertaken, and had misread the nature of the war evolving in the Pacific. Technological and doctrinal developments such as the use of the 'amphibian tractor and improved fire support … removed the need for the light assault units envisioned by Holland Smith at the beginning of the war'.[132] Requirements for assault troops and spearheaders in landings were being fulfilled by the better equipped conventional Marine units whom detractors of the Raiders had long stated were already an amphibious elite. Under such circumstances, the decline of the Raiders became inevitable as they were gradually conventionalised and ultimately

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[129] RG 127, USMC Geographic Files, Russell Islands, Box 315; Folder A10-1; and Bougainville, Box 2; Folder A3-1; Hoffman (1995)
[130] Illustrative of this point is the manner in which the Raiders struggled at Bairoko on New Georgia because of the absence of supporting arms.
[131] Lieutenant-Colonel Carlson to GOC I Amphibious Corps, RG 127, USMC Geographic Files, Guadalcanal, Box 44; Folder A39-1
[132] Hoffman (1995)

disbanded in February 1944 with their personnel amalgamated into the newly reformed 4th Marine Division.

Despite the incompatibility of ranger ideas in the Central Pacific, in September 1944 the 6th Ranger Battalion would be created to cater for specialist operations in the Southwest Pacific. Technically not related to the other Rangers except in name, the 6th Rangers were created from a 'batch conversion' of the 98th Field Artillery Battalion. General Krueger, a foremost American 'champion' of specialist formations, had conceived of the Battalion in an effort to furnish his Sixth Army with a force capable of undertaking independent offensive tasks analogous to those expected of early Commandos. Like the other Ranger Battalions, much of the 6th Ranger's deployment was in a spearheading capacity. Three days before the invasion of Leyte in October 1944 the Rangers landed to secure the outlying islands of Dinagat, Guiuan and Homonhon that potentially threatened the main landings.[133] Similarly, before the Luzon landings the Rangers were tasked with the capture of the undefended Santiago Island, but were left non-combatant roles, such as acting as a headquarters guard, during the main landings.[134]

What made the 6th Rangers unique from their counterparts, both British and American, was that they were never called upon to conduct protracted conventional infantry duties after the assault. This was not due to any overarching decision, however, but was a manifestation of various factors: the nature of operations in the Philippines favouring decentralised control and small groups; a comparative lack of other specialist formations in theatre removing competition for specialist tasks; and, perhaps most significantly, the military situation on the ground in the Philippines was never desperate enough to warrant the use of the Rangers in such a capacity. In the Philippines, the 6th Rangers seldom deployed as a complete unit and, often in company-sized or smaller formations, undertook roles 'so broad as to defy definition'. Their most famous action, and subject of much literature and cinema, was the January 1945 infiltration of Japanese lines to raid the Cabanatuan prison camp to rescue Allied prisoners of war.[135]

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[133] History of 'King II' Operations of 6th Ranger Battalion, October 1944, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21079; Folder INBN-6-0.3; King, pp.55-56; Black (1992), p.250

[134] Combat History of 6th Ranger Battalion, January 1945, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21079; Folder INBN-6-0

[135] Hogan, *US Army*, p.88; Black (1992), p.332; and various documents in RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21079; Folder INBN-6-0.3

The last originally-conceived American commando-style formation raised during the war was the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), a unit better known as Merrill's Marauders. Its inception stemmed from decisions made at the August 1943 Quebec 'Quadrant' conference at which Orde Wingate had so impressed the Americans with his concept of Long Range Penetration that the US Army agreed to form an American Chindit 'counterpart'.[136] Instead of taking Wingate's lead and converting conventional infantry units into jungle specialists, however, the US Army issued a call for volunteers with combat and jungle experience. The result was recruits from three different sources: 960 men from the Caribbean defence command; 970 men from Army Ground Forces; and 674 battle tested men from the South Pacific.[137] Although by late-1943 the precedent of volunteerism for specialist units had become well established, there remained no guarantee that the most suitable men would be put forward and the recruiting process for the Marauders, akin to that of the FSSF, met with a number of problems. Of his command one Marauder officer, Charlton Ogburn, would remark that 'an assemblage of less tractable-looking soldiers I had never seen'. Ogburn believed that instead of issuing a call for volunteers it would have been more profitable to have used an existent and cohesive unit with jungle training, such as the 33rd Infantry in Trinidad, for the task.[138] That this did not occur had much to do with the US Army's perception of the Marauders as being a fleeting expedient.

From the outset the Marauders' role was focused on protracted infiltration and penetration of enemy lines, their initial training being based on the assumption that they would operate in a manner analogous to Wingate's Long Range Penetration Groups. The unit's function altered, however, once command of it ceded from Wingate to Stilwell in early-1944. The Marauders would become what Otto Heilbrunn dubbed, a 'Medium Range Penetration Group' with a task 'closer to that of the Rangers than to that of the Chindits'.[139] From February 1944 onwards Stilwell employed the Marauders, in conjunction with Chinese formations, as a spearheading and encircling force for his Burma Road offensive.[140] The Marauder's campaign, heavily intertwined with both the actions of OSS-led Kachin guerrillas and Chinese regulars, would

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[136] Rooney, David, *Wingate and the Chindits*, (Arms and Armour: London, 1994) p.182
[137] Historical Division, US War Department, *Merrill's Marauders*, (US Army: Washington, D.C., 1990) p.7; See various documents in RG 407, Entry 427, Box 213211; Folder INRG-5301-1.13
[138] Ogburn, p.33
[139] Heilbrunn (1963), pp.92-93
[140] US War Department, *Merrill's Marauders*, p.15

involve an advance of over 750 miles and culminated in their most notable success, the seizure of the important landing ground of Myitkyina.[141] Throughout their operations the Marauders were subjected to massive levels of attrition from both disease and malnutrition as well as from casualties sustained performing countless blocking operations. Such was their wastage rate that whilst engaged at Myitkyina some two-thousand new volunteers were hastily organised and committed, with only a modicum of training, as wholesale reinforcement for the second and third Marauder battalions, whilst all the remaining Marauder veterans were integrated into the first battalion.[142] These losses ultimately became unsustainable and in August 1944 the Marauders were disbanded. This move certainly correlated with the spirit in which the unit was raised: as a provisional and expendable expedient.[143]

Despite some points of divergence in the experience of these various commando and ranger formations, and in spite of the fact that the varied Anglo-American commando and ranger formations were often initially intended to fulfil slightly different roles, their actual deployments and the manner in which their role evolved followed a common pattern. This was a result both of the close relationship between Britain and the US in the inception of these units, in particular the significance of the Commando model on the American formations, as well as being a natural consequence of these formations evolving in a similar manner to the same battlefield requirements. The evolution of commando roles closely mirrored transitions in the overall strategic picture. Peripheral and independent raiding operations were at a premium when the Allies were understrength and on the strategic defensive. Up until mid/late-1942, therefore, many of the commando formations, both existent British examples and emergent US varieties, were employed (albeit often infrequently) in raiding activities; as evident in the cross-Channel and Norwegian activities of the Commandos; the Raider raid on Makin; or even the Ranger's participation in the Dieppe raid. After this point, however, the *raison d'être* of the majority (although not all, as with the 6th Rangers or No.12 Commando, for example) of Anglo-American commando and ranger formations began to shift in conjunction with changes in the strategic situation.

Gradual mobilisation and a transition to the offensive ensured that the war could be fought, as in the favoured American tradition, with an emphasis on firepower and

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[141] *Ibid.* pp.92-113; Prefer, Nathan N., *Vinegar Joe's War*, (Presidio: Navato, CA, 2000)
[142] Prefer, p.155
[143] See various documents in RG 407, Entry 427, Box 213211; Folder INRG-5301-1.13

overwhelming quantitative superiority. In such a climate, expedient irritant raids by relatively large light-infantry formations became distinctly tertiary to operations in direct support of the main effort. Increasingly wedded to the main battle, these commando forces were prone to be viewed as elite infantry, as shock and assault troops to be used at the front, or on the flanks, of conventional deployments. Dieppe, North Africa and Sicily had proven the potential value of using commandos to tackle difficult objectives and, most importantly, to spearhead amphibious assaults. The expansion and modification of both the Commando and Ranger programmes subsequent to 'Husky' epitomises the perceived desirability of maintaining commandos for such tasks. The ever-looming spectre of an invasion of France gave obvious fillip, particularly in the US, to the development and retention of these formations after raiding no longer became a necessary or viable proposition.

Nevertheless, the US created the majority of their ranger formations with a definite understanding that these units were only temporary and expendable expedients that would fill a gap until conventional arms were ready and able to engage the enemy with mass and firepower. Whilst America was certainly willing to embrace these formations, it did so for distinctly limited ends. Ranger formations were perceived as temporary expedients, as mechanisms for gaining experience; a means for aiding the prosecution of amphibious warfare; and as facilitators for the 'American way of war'. Subsequent to these goals being attained, when conventional formations had gained experience and were able to conduct operations at the scale and duration required, there was a definite awkwardness in the ability and willingness of the US to adapt their ranger formations to alternate applications. This discomfort is illustrated both in the general absence of US ranger-style formations undertaking independent or raiding operations, and in the American attitude towards disbanding their formations. Once the USMC was in a position to mount its Central Pacific drive, the Raiders were surplus to requirement; once the US Army had its foothold in France, the FSSF was disbanded and the 2nd and 5th Rangers fought desperately for specialised employment; and once the Marauders and 1st, 3rd and 4th Rangers had sustained heavy casualties it was deemed wiser to disband rather than reconstruct them.

The proliferation of ranger-type formations in the period 1942-1944, whilst never quite keeping pace with the development of the British Commandos, is certainly illustrative of the US willingness to develop these units. Despite this, by late-1944 the

overwhelming majority of these formations had been disbanded or deployed to extinction. The number of men in ranger formations peaked in mid-1943 with approximately 6,630 personnel involved, but by the start of 1945 this figure had declined to 1,350 men. Their pattern of proliferation was quite distinct from that of the British whose Commandos gradually increased until they peaked late-1943/early-1944 with an approximate 9,100 men involved. This number did not drop substantially until the end of the war.[144] The British retained their enthusiasm for the Commandos throughout the war and, compared to the US, were much more inclined to utilise them in both independent tasks, as seen in their operations from Vis and in Greece, and in the main battle, as seen with their lengthy deployments in both Italy and northwest Europe.

As was emphasised at the outset, the evolution and development of commando and ranger formations was closely linked to the proliferation and use of special forces. Almost in tandem with the decline of larger light-infantry commando formations conducting independent direct action, reconnaissance and *coup de main* raids was the rise of smaller, more specialised and flexible special forces with a mandate for such activities. The two events were not unrelated. Usurping some of the more traditional commando roles, special forces would often prove themselves a more versatile and cost-effective alternative to the committal of commando elements. With their raiding role in decline, the commandos were, nevertheless, able to prove their worth in other tasks. However, the more they performed shock troop or conventional tasks, the more they had to adapt, doctrinally and via reorganisation of establishment; and the more they adapted, and the greater their successes in these tasks, the more likely it was that they would be utilised in such a capacity again. Examination of the inception and manner of employment of special forces is thus an important component in understanding the evolution of the Anglo-American commando and ranger formations.

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[144] See Appendix II for further details.

Chapter 2
The inception and employment of special forces

Alongside witnessing the advent of commando formations, the summer of 1940 also saw the emergence of what would become the special forces genre of unit; broadly separated from their commando cousins by being of a smaller scale, operating with a greater degree of autonomy, and undertaking a more diverse range of specialised tasks. Whilst commando and ranger formations generally followed a clearly discernable pattern of inception and employment, the creation and use of special forces was, conversely, rather more complex and prone to much variation. The desperately *ad hoc* inception of many early special forces ensured that they often arose with only vague notions of intent; their roles and manner and employment commonly evolving on highly individualistic lines.

For Britain it was the experience of the Desert War that was to prove instrumental in giving rise to and defining the genre of special forces. The nature of that campaign provided unique circumstances and variables for the creation of special forces units: it was a conflict of supply, of vast distances, open flanks and stretched lines of communication that provided many fertile and accessible targets for raids and reconnaissance. The first British special forces unit created during the war, and one that in many regards cut the mould for future formations, was the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG). The creation of which, in June 1940, was a direct result of the efforts of Major Ralph Bagnold. Bagnold, alongside many of the LRDG's first officers (such as Pat Clayton, Bill Kennedy Shaw or Guy Prendergast) was a pre-war desert explorer of the Libyan Desert.[1] In both late-1939, and again in January 1940, whilst attached to the 7th Armoured Division Bagnold had made suggestions that a unit be formed that, benefiting from his 'almost unique knowledge of the desert and desert travel', could undertake long-range desert patrols for intelligence purposes. Bagnold himself admitted these concepts were in a sense a revival of the Light Car Patrols used against the Senussi Arabs in 1915. On both occasions, however, these proposals were rejected as unwarranted.[2] It would take the Italian declaration of war and the realisation that the British forces in Egypt were drastically outnumbered to provide the requisite necessity

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[1] Kelly, Saul, *The Hunt for Zerzura*, (John Murray: London, 2002) p.136
[2] Bagnold, Ralph A., *Sand, Wind and War: Memoirs of a Desert Explorer*, (University of Arizona Press, 1990) p.123; LRDG War Diary and Narrative, 1940, WO 201/807

for General Archibald Wavell, Commander-in-Chief, Middle East to assent to the adoption of Bagnold's scheme.

Even given the sudden requirement for force amplification and intelligence, the LRDG would have been unlikely to have been created were it not for Bagnold's 'driving power and importunity' for his concept, or for Wavell's patronage and willingness to grant Bagnold a *carte blanche* for his scheme in the face of his own almost crippling shortages of personnel and equipment.[3] Without such support from a man who in the interwar period both had been conversant with both T.E. Lawrence and J.F.C. Fuller about 'motorised guerrillas' and who had personally granted Orde Wingate permission to create the much lauded special night squads in Palestine, it is doubtful that Bagnold would have been able to raise the LRDG as quickly and as thoroughly as he did.[4]

The manner of the LRDG's inception is illustrative of a common process in the creation of so many of Britain's first special forces. Initially heavily intertwined with the concept of the 'private army', these units so often stemmed from an individual innovatory actor such as Bagnold; commonly a relatively junior officer, an 'errant captain', who would both conceive of an idea for a unit and subsequently prove instrumental in its creation, establishment and operations in the field. In reference to military reform in the interwar period Barry Posen highlighted the significance of both the role of the civilian reformer and the 'maverick' military officer as prime motivators for change.[5] The role and prominence of the 'errant captain' in the inception of special forces in the early stages of the Second World War arguably conforms to such a pattern. Determined and innovatory individuals could not, however, hope to overcome the obstacles of orthodoxy alone, and in the creation of their units backing was often needed from a sympathetic, or equally innovative, 'champion': a well-placed senior officer, such as Wavell, willing, and able, to lift the red tape of orthodoxy and allow these formations to be formed in the first instance. For as Murray and Millett emphasised, in application to the interwar period, 'new ways of fighting' cannot 'take root within existing military institutions' without 'the emergence of bureaucratic

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[3] Shaw, W.B. Kennedy, *Long Range Desert Group*, (Collins: London, 1945) p.27
[4] Raugh, Harold E., *Wavell in the Middle East 1939-1941*, (Brassey's: London, 1993) p.22; Fuller, J.F.C., *Lectures on F.S.R. III*, (Sifton Praed: London, 1932) pp.52-56
[5] Posen, p.47

acceptance by *senior* military leaders'.[6] Every 'errant captain' had his 'champion', for without him nothing would have been achieved.

The LRDG was created with the expectation of fulfilling two immediate goals not readily attainable by other means: to provide a reliable 'human intelligence' means of monitoring Italian intentions in Southern Libya, and to act as a force multiplier by harassing far flung Italian outposts in inner-Libya to unnerve the enemy, disrupt his plans and make him alter his dispositions.[7] The LRDG straddled these two principal responsibilities, requiring both offensive and intelligence-gathering capabilities, with great flexibility. Throughout the course of the Desert War the operations of the LRDG remained uniquely broad; they were, in the words of one officer, 'of infinite variety'.[8] The most widely undertaken occupation of the Group was their provision of long range reconnaissance, intelligence gathering, and information reporting. Of particular note were the almost continuous 'road watches' that the unit mounted along the main coastal road between Cyrenaica and Tripolitania from February 1942 onwards. Such was the value attributed to these operations that they would absorb much of the LRDG's time and often took precedence over their other activities in 1942.[9]

With expertise furnished by their nucleus of pre-war desert travellers and enhanced via the attachment of other specialists, such as officers from Egyptian Desert Survey, the LRDG were able to supplement their provision of military intelligence with topographical survey, map making, and reports on 'going'. Such roles were significant in charting the largely unknown terrain west of the Egyptian Frontier. LRDG patrols also performed useful service in undertaking pathfinding and scouting tasks for both Eighth Army and Free French units.[10] Their long range patrols, capable of covering over 3,500 miles in a round trip, also provided a reliable means of transporting agents of SOE, SIS, and MI9; as well as the personnel of the LAF Commando and 'L' Detachment SAS for much of their formative year in the desert. The unit's expertise further ensured that its personnel would find employment as instructional troops, teaching conventional and specialist units alike the arts of desert travel, navigation and

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[6] Millett, Allan R. and Murray, Williamson, (eds.) *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*, (Cambridge University Press, 1996) p.409
[7] Bagnold, pp.123-124
[8] Timpson, Alistair and Gibson-Watt, Andrew, *In Rommel's Backyard*, (Leo Cooper: Barnsley, 2000) p.17
[9] Brigadier T.S. Airey, DMI, notes on LRDG Road Watch, 14 December 1942, WO 201/771
[10] GHQ MEF to Bagnold, 10 July 1941, WO 201/754; LRDG War Diary, September 1940, WO 201/807

signals, and producing training pamphlets on these subjects.[11] Such varied demands on the small unit could, at times, be considered quite exacting.

Although well within their initial mandate, offensive action by the LRDG generally came secondary to intelligence tasks, being largely limited to opportunistic and extra-curricular actions rather than those pre-planned strikes as undertaken by other forces. There were occasional exceptions to this general rule, however, such as in November 1940 when patrols performed a series of raids on Italian strongholds in cooperation with the Free French, most notably attacking the fort of Murzak in the Fezzan and serving as an advance guard for Colonel Leclerc's capture of Kufra Oasis.[12] Furthermore, so long as it did not compromise their intelligence activities, most patrols were given *carte blanche* for 'piracy' and harassment during their deployments.[13] Fluctuations in the strategic situation could, however, shift the priority from intelligence operations towards offensive activities, and *vice versa*. In February 1941, for example, the shock of the arrival of the *Afrika Korps* ensured that aggressive actions took priority in attempts to impede Rommel's advance.[14] Whilst for much of 1942 the intelligence gains of the 'road watch' generally took precedence.

Soon after its first successful operations, there were plans to expand the scope of the LRDG. In October 1940 Orde Wingate arrived in theatre and proposed operating in southern Libya with a 'fully mechanised desert force' of divisional strength that would utilise highly mobile columns supported by organic reconnaissance and tactical aircraft.[15] These plans, many themes of which would later be seen in Wingate's Chindit concept, were wildly impracticable and failed to recognise the precarious manpower and resources situation in theatre; the physical and logistical limitations of operating in the desert; or the significance of keeping operations to a small scale, a central tenet of special forces success. Despite such clear limitations, Bagnold was taken by the scheme and proposed a 'Modified Wingate' whereby the LRDG would be expanded into a self-supporting 'Desert Striking Force' with its own artillery, light armour, infantry and close air support. Although more realistic and informed than Wingate's original concept, such a proposal was still fanciful and little came of it aside

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[11] Shaw, p.91
[12] Maule, Henry, *Out of the Sand – The epic story of General Leclerc and the Fighting Free French*, (Odhams: London, 1966) p.83; Various documents, WO 201/808
[13] Bagnold, p.124
[14] LRDG operations in support of Eighth Army, 8 December 1941, WO 201/811
[15] Rooney, p.48

from some minor experiments whereby the LRDG employed a handful of light tanks, low-calibre guns, and, more successfully, obtained two light aircraft for their own 'private airforce'.[16]

In lieu of such ambitious schemes, Bagnold was promoted out of the LRDG to examine the potential of forming upwards of five more LRDG-equivalent units for operations in the African and Syrian deserts.[17] The only formation to be created from this initiative, however, was the Indian Long Range Squadron (ILRS) formed in mid-1941 from volunteers from Indian cavalry regiments with the expectation of undertaking LRDG-style operations for Persia and Iraq Command (PAIC). Underemployed, in October 1942 the ILRS was transferred to the Libyan desert, placed under LRDG control, and was used to undertake medium-range reconnaissance for Eighth Army, and later helped escort elements of General Leclerc's command across the Fezzan.[18] With the close of operations in the desert, the Squadron was returned to India and remained unemployed until May 1944 when it was used to 'patrol the Persian-Afghan-Russian border zone .... to discourage Soviet attempts to infiltrate clandestine takeover forces into this oil-rich area.'[19]

The LRDG had been proven to be a valuable and versatile formation with their operations providing clear indication of the potential of small-scale, highly mobile, long range special forces. Their successes gave obvious fillip to the establishment of the Special Air Service (SAS) in the summer of 1941. The initial impetus for the inception of the SAS more directly stemmed, however, from shortfalls with the Layforce Commandos. Lieutenant David Stirling of No.8 Commando was frustrated by the infrequency and inadequacy of Commando operations and became convinced that their use was fundamentally flawed. Recuperating in hospital following a mishap in experimenting with parachutes, Stirling devised a proposal for the formation of a small unit that he believed would be capable of undertaking a broader and more flexible range of offensive actions than a Commando. In July 1941 Stirling presented this proposal in a typically unorthodox manner direct to the highest local authorities: General Claude Auchinleck, C-in-C MEF and his Chief of Staff, General Neil Ritchie. Coming at a time when GHQ MEF were looking to expand upon the successes of the

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[16] Bagnold, 'Modified Wingate Scheme', 30 October 1940, WO 201/807; Memorandum by Bagnold, 22 December 1940, WO 201/808
[17] LRDG War Diary and Narrative, April-August 1941, WO 201/809
[18] Major W. McCoy, CO ILRS, Report on deployments, 5 June 1943, WO 201/797
[19] Whittaker, Len, *Some Talk of Private Armies*, (Albanium: Hertfordshire, 1984) p.36

LRDG, Auchinleck was willing act as 'champion' and accordingly granted Stirling a small establishment for 'L' Detachment SAS Brigade (the name being part of a deceptive ruse conceived by Dudley Clarke) and a role in the forthcoming 'Crusader' offensive.

Helped greatly by popular literature, Stirling has attained almost mythological status. Illustrative of the aggrandisement of the man is Morgan's contention that Stirling 'ranks alongside Hannibal and Wellington as one of the most extraordinary gifted and original military thinkers of all time'.[20] Despite such contentions, the themes of Stirling's proposal cannot be considered to be entirely original: the LRDG had been operating in small groups in this theatre for over a year; whilst the February 1941 'Colossus' raid on the Tragino aqueduct in Italy undertaken by the lineal forebears of the Parachute Regiment, had already proven the potential of utilising the parachute for sabotage in depth.[21] Stirling himself also recognised that he owed much to his colleague, and fellow Commando officer, John Steel 'Jock' Lewes, following whose death on an early SAS raid Stirling claimed: 'Jock could far more genuinely claim to be the founder of the SAS than I'.[22] Lewes had already established himself as an exponent of the night-time raid in a number of forays near Tobruk immediately prior to SAS creation, and it was he who was tasked with undertaking the parachute trials that had preceded Stirling's proposal were first carried out.[23] Furthermore, once the unit was raised, it was Lewes who devised practically all formative training schemes and tactics.[24] The issue of originality is not, however, significant. Having the idea was only half of the battle; to 'have the tenacity to drive it though an unwilling and therefore unresponsive higher headquarters was another'.[25] Like Bagnold and the other 'errant captains', Stirling had this determination (not to mention the social connections) to get the idea accepted at higher headquarters and to bring the concept to the field. This is where the true significance of his contribution lies.[26]

Central to Stirling's ideas for the SAS was that the scale of Commando operations was totally unsuited to the strategic realities in the Middle Eastern theatre; he was emphatic

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[20] Morgan, Mike, *Daggers Drawn*, (Sutton: Gloucestershire, 2000) p.21
[21] Lieutenant Deane-Drummond, Report on 'Colossus', 19 December 1942, CAB 106/8
[22] Quoted in Lewes, John, *Jock Lewes: Co-Founder of the SAS,* (Leo Cooper: Barnsley, 2000) p.247
[23] Report on First Parachute Jump in the Middle East, May 1941, WO 218/173
[24] Hoe, Alan, *David Stirling*, (Warner: London, 1992) p.73
[25] *Ibid.* p.90
[26] For a solid examination of Stirling's early proposals that debunks much mythology, see: Asher, Michael, *The Regiment,* (Penguin: London, 2007)

that a smaller unit could undertake raiding operations more efficiently than a Commando. Like many of the men in Layforce, Stirling had been frustrated by the constant cancellation of operations and he believed that the smaller a unit's deployments, the less likely it would be that the headaches of logistics, transportation and administration would impede employment. By dividing his men into a number of small patrols, each of approximately five men, Stirling believed it would be feasible to engage a much wider range of targets than had been possible with the Commandos, moreover, he foresaw that the use of such autonomous groups simultaneously against different targets would magnify the disruptive and destructive effects of each raid and further increase the moral attrition of the enemy. Furthermore, by confining individual attacks to a small-scale it was more likely that each would attain tactical surprise thereby increasing their margin of success, whilst at the same time reducing the potential cost of men and material lost should an operation fail.[27] The ultimate application and success of the SAS in the Desert War would, on the whole, validate this cost-effective logic.

'L' Detachment's first deployment was a set piece attack on airfields near Gazala/Tmimi in conjunction with Auchinleck's 'Crusader' offensive of November 1941. Lack of experience in desert travel and an early fascination with the potential of the parachute ensured that this operation would be the first ever operational parachute jump undertaken in theatre. The operation was, however, a disaster. Atrocious weather and heavy flak ensured that thirty-four of the fifty-five men dropped were killed or captured whilst the objective remained unscathed. It was only when the survivors of the drops were picked up, as planned, by the LRDG for exfiltration, that both Stirling and David Lloyd Owen, a LRDG patrol commander, came to the conclusion that much could be gained from the LRDG transporting the SAS to, as well as from, their objectives. This partnership was soon formalised so that while the SAS took advantage of a safer and more efficient manner of transportation, navigation and administration, the LRDG would receive help facilitating their offensive mandate.[28] This 'marriage' continued for approximately nine months until the SAS, having gained some experience and secured their own transportation, forged different tactical means and made moves towards independence. Despite this, for sometime the SAS remained

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[27] Stirling, 'Origins of the SAS Regiment', 8 November 1948, KCLMA McLeod; Thompson (1998), p.50

[28] Maclean, Fitzroy, *Eastern Approaches*, (Webb: London, 1949) pp.193-194

heavily reliant upon the LRDG for administration, logistics and for the provision of navigators and signallers.

Compared to the myriad of tasks undertaken by the LRDG, the role of the SAS in the desert was comparatively simple, they were fundamentally aggressive raiders, as described by General Auchinleck as being of 'the thug variety'.[29] Their offensive mandate was, however, certainly not limited, and their extensive 'target set' is illustrative of their versatility. Although most successful at attacking airfields, Stirling had nevertheless taken measures to expand the repertoire of targets that the SAS could tackle. In January 1942 to help facilitate attacks on the harbours of, and shipping at, Benghazi and Buerat Stirling had secured the attachment of elements of the 1st Special Boat Section (discussed later) to 'L' Detachment.[30]

It was in a similar vein that Stirling sought to utilise the advantage offered by personnel of the 'Special Interrogation Group' (SIG). Raised in April 1942, the SIG was an independent unit of platoon strength comprised of fluent German linguists, mainly Palestinian Jews of German descent formerly of No.51 Commando. Led by a British officer, Captain Herbert Buck, the unit would don enemy uniforms and masquerade as *Afrika Korps* personnel to infiltrate enemy lines where they could undertake intelligence and sabotage tasks.[31] Securing the temporary attachment of the SIG to the SAS in June 1942 Stirling hoped that they would help facilitate a raid of Free French personnel (similarly attached to 'L' Detachment) on Derna. Unfortunately, treachery within the SIG ranks, resulting from a German NCO acting as something of a double agent, compromised the operation and led to the capture of the majority of the force.[32] Equally ill-fated was the SIG's participation leading the deception to facilitate the failed large scale raid on Tobruk in September 1942 during which the unit was decimated by heavy casualties. Although at times certain special forces would don civilian clothes or reap the benefits of ambiguous uniforms, actually employing enemy uniform to masquerade as enemy soldiery was, in Anglo-American special forces, limited to the SIG. Stirling's use of the SIG and SBS are illustrative both of his

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[29] General Auchinleck, 'Future of 1st SS Regiment', 26 July 1942, WO 201/728
[30] Pitt, Barrie, *Special Boat Squadron*, (Century: London, 1983) p.25
[31] Colonel T.S. Airey, GS to Brigadier G.M.O. Davy, DDO, 1 April 1942, WO 201/732
[32] Asher has suggested this did not occur, instead contending that the operation had been compromised from the outset by the Abwher's Cairo 'Rebecca' spy ring. Asher (2007), p.122

expansionist desires and his constant drive to search for diverse operational means and methods.[33]

Like the LRDG, the SAS also had an instructional role and trained various personnel in demolitions and parachuting.[34] Their early misfortunes with parachutes notwithstanding, Stirling had insisted that all SAS personnel qualify in their use so as to maintain the unit's flexibility; this move had ensured that the SAS would develop relatively elaborate training facilities around Kabrit. In light of this, in mid-1942 it was even suggested that 'L' Detachment be made responsible for training, and providing the nucleus of, an entire airborne brigade.[35] Adamant that this would be to the detriment of his unit and claiming that the use of his men in such a manner would be analogous to 'using medical specialists as stretcher bearers', Stirling was, however, consistently able to lobby against such dramatically expanded instructional duties.[36] Due to the facilities at Kabrit, however, until late-1942 the SAS instructors would be responsible for all of the limited parachute instruction that occurred in the Middle East.

'Errant captains' were rarely as instrumental in the creation and operation of their unit as was Vladimir Peniakoff, 'Popski', commander in the Desert War of both the Libyan Arab Force (LAF) Commando and, later, Popski's Private Army (PPA); for in both instances he 'created, controlled, directed and inspired' the formations.[37] Early in the war Popski had joined the LAF but was frustrated with the lack of action. He thus proposed using his knowledge of desert travel and of the Cyrenaican Arabs honed before the war to establish an intelligence network 'covering the Jebel Akhdar from Derna to Benghazi – to take control of the friendly Arab tribes in that area'. In April 1942, in a climate of desperation following Rommel's recent advances, Popski was granted permission to form the LAF Commando for these purposes; a rather grand-sounding name for a unit comprising Popski, one Arab officer, a British sergeant and 22 Arab soldiers which served, in Popski's words, as little more than a 'personal bodyguard'.[38] The main occupation of the LAF Commando was to be embedded in, as opposed to patrolling, the Jebel Akhdar to fulfil an intelligence collecting, analysing

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[33] *Ibid.*, p.141
[34] 'Brief history of 'L' Detachment SAS Brigade and 1st SAS Regiment 1941-1942', WO 201/721
[35] General Arthur Smith, DCGS to General Ritchie, March 1942, WO 201/731; Windmill, Lorna Almonds, *Gentleman Jim*, (Constable & Robinson: London, 2001) p.116
[36] Stirling to GHQ MEF, 3 May 1942, WO 201/732
[37] Seymour, William, *British Special Forces*, (Pen & Sword: Barnsley, 2006) p.266
[38] Peniakoff, Vladimir, *Popski's Private Army*, (Cassell: London, 2003) pp.61-62

and disseminating function. From May 1942 the unit began to undertake more aggressive roles when Popski was ordered to spread 'alarm and despondency' and target enemy fuel supplies; something it did successfully; sabotaging an Italian petrol dump at El Qubba on 19 May 1942 destroying an estimated 100,000 gallons of petrol.[39] The LAF Commando, alongside the LRDG, also had a role in assisting 'Advance A Force' (MI9) in aiding evaders and escaped POWs getting back to Allied lines.[40]

Almost six months after the LAF Commando's inception it was disbanded, and when Popski returned from deployment Colonel John Hackett, heading the Raiding Forces Branch of GHQ MEF, suggested 'that a unit operating on the lines of Popski's parties but with bigger means and transport of its own', would be able to do useful service harassing the enemy's withdrawal following El Alamein.[41] Popski sought to fulfil this proposition commanding a LRDG squadron, believing that so doing he 'would achieve results far greater than if ... saddled with the responsibilities of a unit' of his own.[42] This did not, however, transpire and consequently, on 3 November 1942, No.1 Demolition Squadron, PPA was established as the smallest independent unit in the British Army and Popski was given fourteen days to recruit, equip, and organise his twenty-man 'army'.[43] The rapid creation of PPA as an autonomous motorised special force at this late stage in the campaign highlights the continued ascendancy and desirability of such methods in the Desert War even after the strategic initiative had been regained with El Alamein.

In the short space of time that it took PPA to be raised, equipped and deployed, however, Eighth Army had liberated Cyrenaica and the purpose for which PPA had been formed had ceased to exist. The move towards Tunisia meant PPA would be operating over unfamiliar terrain without the benefit of Popski's unique contacts, furthermore, the shortening of the Axis lines of communication ensured that petrol supplies (which in light of El Qubba, Popski was viewed as somewhat of a specialist at attacking) were becoming both less of a problem for Rommel and less accessible to raiders.[44] Rather than being disbanded, PPA found alternative employment operating in

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[39] *Ibid.* p.127
[40] Foot and Langley, p.96
[41] Historical summary of No.1 Demolition Squadron PPA, December 1945, WO 106/2332
[42] Peniakoff, p.210
[43] Yunnie, Robert Park, *Fighting with Popski's Private Army*, (Greenhill: London, 2002) p.10
[44] Peniakoff, pp.210; 226

close conjunction with the LRDG (to whom they were briefly attached) performing reconnaissance and topographical survey. Later, operating independently, and more by accident than design, PPA was the first complete Eighth Army unit to link up with First Army from whose lines they would subsequently focus on 'harassing enemy convoys and on raiding headquarters and landing-grounds'.[45] Following North Africa, PPA would deploy to Italy (and much later Austria) where their *modus operandi* remained largely unchanged. The unit would utilise their mobile autonomous patrols of proportionately heavily armed jeeps to conduct both 'alarm and despondency' harassment and intelligence gathering activities behind the enemy line, as well as occasionally serving in a short-range reconnaissance capacity for conventional formations.

The Desert War was a theatre uniquely apposite for the proliferation and use of special forces. It was a theatre in which special forces were able to gain a gradual but definite ascendancy over their Commando counterparts. Just as 'L' Detachment rose from remnants of the original 'Layforce' Commandos, it was equally fitting that the newly expanded 1st SAS Regiment, created in September 1942, came up to establishment from the disbandment of the underutilised Middle East Commando (or, as it had become known, the 1st SS Regiment).[46] The importance of the SAS gaining regimental establishment almost exactly one year after their first operation should not be underestimated. It validated special forces tactics, ended much of the talk of private armies, and showed that, in the desert at least, these bodies were preferable to other irregular means.

Whilst the American adoption of ranger formations, as has been noted, was inherently linked to the example of the British Army Commandos, the US conception of special forces units, on the other hand, occurred broadly independently of the British. Unlike in the British instance, the majority of US special forces capabilities arose under the aegis of one organisation: William J. Donovan's COI/OSS. In July and December 1940, at the request of President Roosevelt and Frank Knox, Secretary of US Navy, Donovan had embarked upon a worldwide fact finding tour of British military and subversive commands in which he fostered a clear idea of America's need to develop

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[45] War Diary of No.1 Demolition Squadron, PPA, March 1943, WO 169/11083; Historical summary of No.1 Demolition Squadron, PPA, December 1945, WO 106/2332
[46] GHQ MEF Operational Instruction No.145 to G1(RF), 28 September 1942, WO 201/743; Lieutenant-General R.L. McCreery, CGS to C-in-C MEF, September 1942, WO 201/732

both intelligence and covert operations capabilities.[47] Convincing the President of such a point, in July 1941 Roosevelt appointed Donovan as Coordinator of Information (COI) with the mandate to 'direct the New Deal's excursion into espionage, sabotage, "black" propaganda, guerrilla warfare, and other "un-American" subversive practices'.[48] As COI, and later head of OSS, Donovan fulfilled an important role in developing American specialist warfare capabilities. Although many of the concepts were inherited from the British, as Paddock emphasised, 'only a man of his stature, perseverance, and personal dynamism could have successfully applied those unorthodox concepts in the face of the intense opposition and competing bureaucratic interests'.[49]

Three months after becoming COI Donovan undertook moves to define his 'special operations' responsibilities and in October 1941 established the SA/G ('Special Activities/ Goodfellow') Section with the responsibility of making arrangements for guerrilla and special operations. Discussions within this branch led by Lieutenant-Colonel Solborg and Captain James Roosevelt (again influenced by his recent observation of British developments) aired the possibility of raising 2,500 'elite troops' which could serve as guerrilla battalions behind enemy lines.[50] Following Pearl Harbor, on 22 December, Donovan was able to formally outline the SA/G Section's responsibilities, which contained, alongside subversive and fifth column activities, proposals for guerrilla warfare, including: 'The establishment and support of small bands of local origin under definite leaders'; and 'the formation in the United States of guerrilla forces military in nature'.[51]

By May 1942 Donovan had modified his ideas in such fields and proposed the formation of numerous region-specific 'guerrilla battalions' each made up of highly-trained and linguistically-talented personnel.[52] At this, time, however, these schemes were rejected by the War Department, not only because (akin to the Independent Companies) they were somewhat impracticable, but also because there was significant opposition towards a quasi-civilian agency undertaking military operations over which the War Department would have no direct jurisdiction. In spite of this, any reticence

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[47] Casey, William, *Secret War Against Hitler*, (Simon and Schuster: London, 1990) p.16
[48] Harris Smith, Richard, *OSS*, (University of California Press: London, 1972) p.1
[49] Paddock, p.36
[50] Major A. Peter Dewey, 'OG History', 13 June 1945, RG 226, Entry 99, Box 98; Folder 5, p.8
[51] Roosevelt, Kermit, *War Report of the OSS*, Volume I (Walker: New York, 1976) p 80
[52] Donovan to War Department, 1 August 1942, RG 226, Entry 136, Box 140; Folder 1464

towards such activities as being 'un-American', had by this stage been largely suppressed and Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War, concurred in the basic idea presented by Donovan that 'the conduct of organised sabotage in areas occupied by the enemy has become an essential mode of warfare'.[53]

It was only with the creation of OSS, in June 1942, however, that Donovan was officially able to assume responsibility for 'special operations' which prompted the formation of the Special Operations (SO) branch (from the nucleus of the SA/G section) with a mandate for its conduct. Progress was, however, slow. It was not until 23 December 1942 that JCS permitted OSS to undertake approved 'special operations' including clandestine sabotage, psychological operations, the orchestration and conduct of *coup de main* attacks, and guerrilla warfare. But there was a continued reticence towards involving significant numbers of US service personnel in such activities and it was made explicit that: '.... personnel to be provided for guerrilla warfare will be limited to organisers, fomenters, and operational nuclei'.[54] Despite this limiting proviso, special forces units were a natural concomitant of this directive, and the 'operational nuclei' would ultimately be manifested in the various OSS Operational Groups (OGs). The OGs were the most significant American special forces unit created during the war, each comprising small numbers (30 men per group) of highly-trained bilingual uniformed soldiers with the role of acting as 'nuclei' for indigenous guerrilla movements, they typified the dominant American notion of special operations.[55]

There remained, however, significant opposition to Donovan forming a 'private army' and considerable red tape had to be surmounted before OSS had access to anything approaching its own military units. Thus despite having received authorisation for the OG concept, OSS was not permitted to begin recruiting.[56] The catalyst for the concerted creation of OGs came in April 1943 when General Eisenhower at AFHQ, who had been given an outline of OSS capabilities, requested the dispatch of 'four to eight operational groups or nuclei, to be used as organisers, fomenters and operational

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[53] Stimson to Donovan, 8 July 1942, RG 226, Entry 136, Box 140; Folder 1464
[54] JCS Directive 155/4/D, 'Functions of the OSS', 23 December 1942, RG 218, Records of the JCS, Central Decimal File 1942-45, Box 372; Folder CGS 385 Sec.1 Pt.3
[55] OSS/London War Diaries, Vol.8, KCLMA MF 208
[56] Obolensky, Serge, *One Man in his Time*, (Hutchinson: London, 1960) pp.275; Casey, p.93

nuclei in areas adjacent to this theatre'.[57] In the expectation of similar requests from other theatre commands, on 13 May the OGs were granted branch status within OSS (which remained subordinate to the SO branch at this time) and were thus enabled to recruit personnel and deploy them in the field.[58] Recruiting for the OGs from the US Army thus began, first with native Italian speakers and subsequently extending to French, German, Norwegian, Yugoslav and Greek speaking personnel.[59] Although many of OSS's moves in the Second World War were strongly influenced by the British, the composition and mandate for the OGs was quite unique. The OGs were a solely American endeavour and Britain would form no comparable formation, in either organisation or *raison d'être*, during the war.

The Desert War experience had highlighted the potential of special forces in both independent action and in support of the main campaign. It had created, as Gordon contended, a 'cult of special forces' which ensured 'by spring 1943 their prestige virtually ensured that new roles would be found for them as the war shifted to the other side of the Mediterranean.'[60] It was abundantly clear, however, that the uniquely apposite circumstances and conditions of the Desert War would not be replicated in other theatres and that special forces would have to adapt both their establishments and methods to new operating conditions and roles. As eyes turned towards the conduct of operations on Continental Europe, the British conception of autonomous special forces would have to adapt to operations occurring at an increased depth and involving an increased level of cooperation with indigenous guerrilla movements.

In March 1943 after some debate, in which both disbandment and a transition to non-combatant duties were swiftly ruled out, it was agreed that the LRDG's experience in conducting independent operations in depth and their excellent navigation and signalling skills would make them ideal GHQ liaison troops for operations alongside partisans in Greece and the Balkans.[61] To help facilitate such roles, and thus increasing their versatility, the LRDG underwent a period of supplementary training including basic language skills, parachuting, mountaineering, skiing and, under the instruction of

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[57] Lieutenant-Colonel Ellery C. Huntington Jr. to Major-General W.B. Smith, Chief of Staff AFHQ, 1 February 1943, RG 218, Geographical File 1942-45, Box 153; Folder CCS 385 North Africa
[58] Director OSS Special Order No.21, 13 May 1943, RG 226, Entry 136, Box 140; Folder 1460
[59] Personnel for Polish and Danish OGs were also recruited but never operationally deployed. See various OSS correspondence, RG 218, Records of the JCS, Central Decimal File 1942-45, CCS 385, Box 372; Folder CCS 385 Sec.1 Pt.5
[60] Gordon, p.179
[61] Brigadier Davy, DMO, Future policy for LRDG, 7 March 1943, WO 201/797

the Special Boat Squadron (to be discussed below), small boat work.[62] After such preparations, the LRDG, alongside the SBS (Squadron), formed part of 'Raiding Forces Aegean' with the initial task to land on a number of the small islands in theatre and act as an 'advance guard' for the arrival of larger British forces *en route*.[63]

The primary role of the LRDG in Greece and the Aegean remained that of intelligence gathering and reconnaissance. Offensive operations and liaison with partisans were considered secondary tasks.[64] On various Aegean and Yugoslavian islands LRDG patrols would undertake valuable 'shipping watches' reporting the movement of enemy shipping and personnel and directing strikes against these by the RAF or Royal Navy.[65] Deployment to the Aegean did, however, embroil the LRDG in the desperate efforts to cling onto the 'island prizes' that had been gained with the Italian capitulation. In such a climate the LRDG faced a number of inappropriate deployments such as their casualty-rife attack on the island of Levitha, or their use in the defence of Leros. Subsequent LRDG operations highlighted the continued versatility of the unit as its patrols were gainfully employed throughout Greece, Albania, and Yugoslavia in both intelligence and pathfinding advance guard tasks (occasionally in depth via parachute), as well as undertaking more aggressive activities both independently and alongside various conventional, indigenous and Allied specialist formations.

Before the close of operations in North Africa, the newly-expanded SAS Regiment would undergo many organisational changes in an effort to adapt to post-desert operations. The predominant catalyst for change was the capture of David Stirling, the architect and leader of the SAS, in early-1943. The removal of such a significant and influential figure from the scene created real complications in long range planning for the unit.[66] Following Stirling's capture the lack of a similar unifying figure was a real limitation; and Stirling's spiritual (but not technical) successor, Major Robert Blair 'Paddy' Mayne, lacked Stirling's social connections and skills of high-level diplomacy, and was unable, or unwilling, to argue for the retention of the force in its

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[62] Report of Lieutenant-Colonel Prendergast, CO LRDG, August 1943, WO 201/797
[63] 'Raiding Forces – the story of an Independent Command in the Aegean, 1943-1945' edited by Captain G.W. Read, WO 201/2836 p.14
[64] GHQ MEF directive to Brigadier Turnbull, OC Raiding Forces, November 1943, WO 201/797
[65] See LRDG Operational Instructions, WO 204/6810
[66] Pleydell, Malcolm James, *One Doctor's War*, (Unpublished Memoir) p.110 in IWM Pleydell 90/25/1

existent form.[67] Although there was faith placed in SAS methods, as seen with both the 1st SAS's regimental expansion and the creation of the 2nd SAS Regiment under Lieutenant-Colonel William Stirling (brother of David) at AFHQ in early-1943, it was widely understood that aggressive autonomous raids on assets in the enemy's rear, the primary occupation of the SAS in the desert, would become much more difficult in other, less apposite, theatres. High-level discussions in Casablanca in February 1943 favoured turning the SAS 'into a normal SS unit [i.e. Commando] for raiding overseas and a small SS squadron for small-scale sabotage-and-scuttle raids'.[68] The decision was consequently taken to split the 1st SAS Regiment into two independent formations: the Special Raiding Squadron [SRS] under the command of Mayne and the Special Boat Squadron [SBS] under Major George Jellicoe. Between these two formations, and the newly created 2nd SAS Regiment, there would be significant diversity in function and employment.

When it was created in February 1943 it was decided that the SRS should 'form a unit of similar characteristics [to a Commando] in the near future', and planners had assigned the unit a spearheading role in the invasion of Sicily.[69] In preparation for such a role the SRS underwent amphibious training and made alterations to their organisation and tactical approach. Their small jeep-borne patrols were largely dissolved and replaced with a troop-centric establishment in which each troop was equipped with a mortar, engineer and signals section.[70] At 'Husky' the SRS took to the commando role with élan and skilfully neutralised the Cape Murro di Porco coastal batteries during the initial assault. Links with the Commandos were further strengthened when the Squadron was deployed in a nominal brigade with Nos.3 and 40(RM) Commandos under Brigadier John Durnford-Slater for the commencement of the Italian offensive, taking part in operations in the 'toe' of Italy and later participating in the Termoli landings.[71] The SRS severed its links with the Commando model in December 1943 when it was decided to revive the 1st SAS Regiment for operations in support of the invasion of France, a decision which resulted in the SRS being transferred to Britain where it was expanded and renamed.

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[67] Morris, Eric, *Guerrillas in Uniform*, (Hutchinson: London, 1989) p.163
[68] Brigadier F.W. de Guingand, Chief of Staff, Eighth Army to GHQ MEF, 16 February 1943, WO 201/771
[69] Brigadier Davy, DMO to No.1 Planning Staff, 24 February 1943, WO 204/7960
[70] Mortimer, Gavin, *Stirling's Men*, (Weidenfeld and Nicolson: London, 2004) p.109
[71] Durnford-Slater, p.153

The function of the Special Boat Squadron (later Service), defined at the same time as the SRS, was much more closely related to those Casablanca plans for a 'small SS squadron for small-scale sabotage-and-scuttle raids'. Its general mandate was to undertake independent small-scale raids on land-based targets that could be approached from the sea as well as undertaking 'attacks on shipping and harbour installations'. [72] The offensive employment of the SBS was broad, the unit would undertake various small-scale sabotage raids against Sicily, Sardinia, Crete, and in the Aegean and Adriatic; participate in larger combined operations such as their attack on Simi in July 1944; and perform more protracted duties, both independently and in support of conventional forces, such as during the liberation of Greece or in Eighth Army's actions near Lake Commachio.[73] The SBS was not, however, of the 'thug variety', and its more cerebral capabilities were well illustrated in the deployment of political liaison groups with surrendering Italian garrisons in the Aegean; their liaison with partisan formations in Greece and Yugoslavia; and their widespread undertaking of ferrying, reconnaissance and shipping watch operations. In many deployments the SBS worked very closely with the LRDG and in both the Aegean and, later, the northern Adriatic, the two units worked 'together in harmony' sharing and complementing each other's responsibilities perfectly.[74]

The 2nd SAS Regiment was raised in early-1943 with the core of its personnel coming from the Small Scale Raiding Force. This Force had its origins in an SOE-maintained mission that was formed in spring 1941 from a small nucleus of men from No.7 Commando. It covertly operated the small *Maid Honor* vessel off the coast of West Africa and performed a variety of roles including agent transport and reconnaissance.[75] The mission returned to Britain at a time when Mountbatten, CCO, sought to raise a small 'amphibious sabotage force' which would be able to undertake pin-prick coastal raids without many of the bureaucratic complications confounding larger Commando

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[72] GHQ MEF to Brigadier Turnbull, November 1943, WO 201/797
[73] Warner, Phillip, *Special Air Service*, (Sphere: London, 1986) p.97; and various reports in WO 170/4012 and WO 201/2831
[74] Lloyd-Owen, David, *The larder was often bare – The Story of the Long Range Desert Group, 1943-1945*, (Unpublished memoir, 1955) in IWM Lloyd-Owen, PP/MCR/C13, Reel 4; Brigadier Davy, CO LFA to Brigadier J. Napier, AFHQ, 18 September 1944, KCLMA Davy
[75] For a good appraisal, see: Dear, Ian, *Sabotage and Subversion*, (Cassell: London, 1996) pp.61-69; Appleyard, J.E., *Geoffrey, Being the Story of 'Apple' of the Commandos and Special Air Service Regiment*, (Blandford, 1946) pp.71-78

deployments.[76] The 'Maid Honor Force' provided the perfect nucleus for what in March 1942 became the SSRF.[77]

The *raison d'être* of the SSRF was the small-scale 'smash-and-grab' operation, principally directed at prisoner capture for intelligence purposes, and throughout 1942 the unit was relatively widely employed in such a capacity.[78] Although generally successful, by late-1942 a number of factors transpired to threaten the Force's existence. An unsuccessful raid near the Cherbourg Peninsula on 12 September resulted in the loss of eleven men of the small unit including both Major Gustavus March-Philipps and Captain Graham Hayes, the unit's commander and second-in-command respectively.[79] The loss of such experienced personnel, architects of the unit's existence, hit the small force hard, and it is testament to the character of the remainder of the personnel that the unit was not dissolved there and then. Instead, in November 1942, the unit was actually expanded beyond its initial establishment via the attachment of personnel from No.12 Commando, and was placed under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel William Stirling.[80] Despite this expansion, SSRF operations were being increasingly curtailed for fear that their very modest results did not justify their stirring up of the enemy's coastline. When Generals Eisenhower and Alexander at AFHQ began to call for the formation of an SAS-style organisation under their command in Algiers, the personnel of the underemployed SSRF, conveniently commanded by David Stirling's brother, was thus the obvious candidate to be sent to North Africa to form the nucleus of the 2nd SAS Regiment.[81]

The 2nd SAS's first operations from North Africa and Malta were small reconnaissance raids undertaken against the small Mediterranean islands of Pantellaria ('Snapdragon') and Lampedusa ('Buttercup'), actions which no doubt benefited significantly from the presence of experienced SSRF hands.[82] Plans to employ the 2nd SAS overland in North Africa in a manner analogous to the 1st SAS in the desert were, however, generally thwarted by unsuitable terrain, few accessible targets and a more concentrated enemy. Prior to the invasion of Sicily, William Stirling pressed for a wide-ranging deployment

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[76] Mountbatten to COS, 19 February 1942, WO 106/4117
[77] The SSRF was occasionally referred to as the Small Scale Raiding Company or by its cover name of No.62 Commando.
[78] C-in-C Plymouth to Secretary of the Admiralty, 4 November 1944, ADM 116/5112
[79] Appleyard, pp.123-127
[80] *Ibid.*, p.134
[81] See various COHQ correspondence, January 1943, DEFE 2/957
[82] Appleyard, p.172; and various operational reports, WO 204/1950

of his Regiment and recommended the dispatch of large numbers of small autonomous groups via parachute in a concentrated effort to overwhelm enemy lines of communication on the island.[83] The scale, depth and ambition of these proposals was a marked departure from any previous SAS operations and they were ultimately rejected both because of a lack of transport aircraft and because of an unwillingness to employ the SAS in penny packets. In the event, Stirling's Sicilian ambitions occurred only in token form with two small operations mounted in direct support of the invasion: 'Narcissus', a naval assault on a lighthouse on the south; and 'Chestnut' a largely ineffective parachute deployment targeting lines of communications in Northern Sicily. The Regiment also conducted two more indirect operations in support of the invasion: 'Waterlily' targeting railroads in Genoa, and 'Hawthorn' against Sardinian airfields.[84]

For the invasion of Italy Stirling repeated his suggestions for a wide and coordinated deployment of his Regiment. He believed, somewhat naively, that:

> Jeep patrols brought in by WACO gliders could fight their way to vital objectives with explosives by the ton. In concert with a major operation, mountainous areas could be infested with small parties, which if sufficiently numerous, will saturate completely local defences, and paralyse communications unhampered.[85]

Nonetheless, similar limitations as those before Sicily ensured that only five small parties were dropped in support of Salerno. A frustrated Stirling argued that what was required was: 'Not five parties ill-equipped, but 50 or 100 parties with adequate equipment' to adequately disrupt enemy communications and isolate and delay reinforcement to a beachhead. He argued that had this been laid on, German supply and reinforcement to Salerno 'by rail ... would have been negligible. Telephone communication, power supplies and road transport would have been reduced to a state of chaos'.[86] That the unit was not deployed as such at this time was, however, a result of more than reticence on the part of AFHQ: material constraints on aircraft were severe; intelligence about rear areas was scant; and the Italian partisans were only in their formative periods.

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[83] W. Stirling, 'Appreciation of 2 SAS Regiment', 29 April 1943, WO 204/7960
[84] Mortimer, *Stirling's Men*, p.97; Major A.R.W. Low, AFHQ General Staff, 'Note on Special Operations for Husky', July 1943, WO 204/7960
[85] W. Stirling to 15 Army Group, 1 July 1943, RG 226, Entry 97, Box 41; Folder 713
[86] W. Stirling to 15 Army Group, 1 December 1943, WO 204/1949

With hindsight and an understanding of the problems in deploying, supplying and coordinating even a handful of small groups, it seems likely (assuming all parties could be equipped and deployed as intended) that following an initial impact, which may well have caused surprise and briefly impeded enemy communications, that the effect of these groups would have been short-lived; underexploited by other arms; and would have been swiftly suppressed with significant loss to the SAS. At this stage of the war SAS operations were still a very new concept and parachute operations in Italy were far removed from the vehicular patrols that had operated so successfully in the desert. The potential gains expounded by Stirling were largely theoretical and there was certainly no tangible evidence that such activities would be able to cripple enemy communications to any great extent. The high command cannot be blamed for not being willing to risk squandering this unit, and the resources to support it, on such ambitious schemes.

After the initial landings in Italy, therefore, the 2nd SAS Regiment spent much of its time operating in the manner of a reconnaissance squadron undertaking foot and jeep patrols at the immediate front of conventional Allied units.[87] Proportions of the unit also deployed at the Termoli landing alongside the SRS. Those few specialist deployments that were undertaken, such as those in support of Salerno, or later, the handful of operations conducted for the benefit of Anzio did, however, show that there was some potential in using small groups for disruption and harassment behind the enemy lines in concert with larger conventional landings.[88]

SAS activities in Italy did, however, attract the eye of the 'Overlord' planners and in early-1944 the 2nd SAS and SRS were dispatched to Britain to form the SAS Brigade which would include the two British Regiments alongside two Free French Regiments (known as the 3rd and 4th SAS) and one Belgian parachute battalion (known as the 5th SAS). General Montgomery believed that the SAS Brigade could 'assist in forming a wide and sustained belt of small independent parties round the "OVERLORD" bridgehead area' that would obstruct German lines of communication and delay the movement of German mobile reserve formations to the beaches during the early stages

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[87] Colonel Franks, Report on SAS Regiment in Italy, period Taranto-Termoli, WO 218/176
[88] Strawson, John, *History of the SAS Regiment*, (Grafton: London, 1986) pp.139-143; Thompson (1998), pp.276-281; Farran, Roy, *Winged Dagger*, (Cassell: London, 1998) p.158

of the operation.[89] Although this bore some similarities to Stirling's suggestions in Italy, it lacked the crucial element of depth. Montgomery's scheme represented a fundamentally tactical deployment of the SAS widely thought to be unsuitable for reasons of 'security, unsuitability of terrain, the difficulty of the force being landed and resupplied in this area, shortage of aircraft around D-Day and the unlikelihood of the force achieving results commensurate with casualties'.[90] Although such a use of the Brigade may have caused localised confusion and discomfort for German formations in the beachhead areas, it would have been very difficult to mount and, with non-existent Resistance infrastructure at the edge of the battle area, impossible to sustain. It could have potentially resulted in the destruction of the entire SAS Brigade.

Although by this stage the SAS were increasingly regarded as a useful and effective formation, this same respect did not extend in all quarters to a widespread knowledge and understanding of their potential roles and employment. Montgomery's suggestions were made in the face of a growing body of understanding, emanating from AFHQ, about the best use of the SAS. In January 1944 AFHQ, under advice of Stirling and Co., had recommended that 'the most suitable employment for the Regiment is in small [3-5man] long range raiding parties in a strategic rather than tactical role.'[91] A slightly later appraisal, again contradicting Montgomery's projected use of the Brigade, stated that: 'The SAS task is to break the weakest link in the chain of enemy communication and to keep that link broken. The weakest link and the most effective point of attack coincide – usually between 75 and 150 or more miles behind the line.'[92] It was not until May 1944, and after significant debate that led to Stirling's resignation, that plans for SAS employment in France were altered to a 'strategical role in back areas.... To harass enemy lines of communication' and 'in conjunction with SOE to link up with and assist the ... French resistance'.[93]

Elements of the SAS Brigade were sent to France from D minus 1 onwards and, although varied, their role can be broadly divided into three categories that were not mutually exclusive: sabotage and small-scale offensive operations from static bases or

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[89] General L.C. Hollis to Prime Minister, 27 January 1944, WO 106/4158; SHAEF memorandum, 'NEPTUNE – Action of SAS Troops', April 1944, WO 218/189
[90] Lieutenant-Colonel Collins, GSO-1 (SAS), 'Notes on the Organisation, History and Employment of SAS Troops', May 1945, KCLMA McLeod
[91] AFHQ summary on 2nd SAS Regiment, 24 January 1944, WO 204/10242
[92] AFHQ, 'Scope, Employment and Organisation of SAS Troops', 13 February 1944, WO 204/1949
[93] Lieutenant-General Browning, GOC Airborne Troops to Chief of Staff, 21 Army Group, 8 May 1944, WO 218/189

'strongholds' in enemy territory; roving flying column operations or 'peripatetic affairs'; and operations in direct support of organised resistance.[94] The use of static bases by the Brigade, established at various locations from D+1 onwards, represented one of the more controversial changes in the SAS's *modus operandi*.[95] The 'strongholds' were intended to serve as mounting bases for operations and as havens at which supplies could be stored and Resistance forces given instruction.[96] Despite being an important requirement for undertaking protracted operations in depth, the development of extensive static strongholds arguably sinned against the well-established maxims of small-scale, surprise and mobility which had dominated earlier successful SAS operations. That certain of the strongholds, such as 'Bulbasket', were compromised and attacked by superior forces, resulting in heavy SAS losses, certainly opens up debate, not so much as to whether strongholds should have been used, but as to whether so many men should have been employed in static positions undertaking conspicuous actions with so few defensive measures.[97] A further limitation was that many SAS operations were hamstrung by a lack of mobility in the field. Ford believes that the general absence of jeeps 'certainly detracted from their effectiveness'.[98] Once the strategic situation had become more fluid, however, it was possible (if not essential) for the SAS to deploy mobile patrols in harassment operations.

The SAS Brigade in France was also tasked with a number of more unique deployments: 'Haft' and 'Defoe' were reconnaissance operations specifically intended to relay targeting information to the Allied air forces; 'Titanic-4' was a deception operation in which six SAS men were dropped on the eve of D-Day alongside large numbers of dummy paratroopers to suggest a large-scale airborne assault; whilst 'Gaff' saw a patrol tasked with the assassination of Field-Marshal Rommel.[99] The latter operation is an example of an infrequent task for wartime special forces: the deliberate targeting of enemy leaders for assassination or kidnap. Other examples of such activities are 'Flipper', undertaken by former personnel of No.11 Commando that

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[94] Ford, Roger, *Fire from the Forest – The SAS Brigade in France, 1944,* (Cassell: London, 2003) p.36

[95] Although the SAS had used forward operating bases behind the enemy's lines in the Desert War their later use of strongholds in France were, because of the different nature of the operational environment, simply not comparable.

[96] Lieutenant-Colonel Collins, 'Notes on the Organisation, History and Employment of SAS Troops', May 1945, KCLMA McLeod

[97] Hastings, Max, *Das Reich – Resistance and the march of the 2nd SS Panzer Division through France*, (Michael Joseph: London, 1981) p.209

[98] Ford (2003), p.100

[99] *Ibid.*, pp.117; 145-150

formed something of a 'private army' under Lieutenant-Colonel Keyes to target Rommel in November 1941; the kidnapping of pro-Axis Persian General Zahidi in late-1942 by SAS Captain Fitzroy Maclean; or SOE's kidnap of General Kreipe on Crete in April 1944. It is interesting to note the general absence of similar operations undertaken by US special forces. The closest they came to such tasks was an aborted Alamo Scout (to be discussed later) operation of May 1944 to kidnap Lieutenant-General Adachi in New Guinea.[100] US specialist formations were, conversely, much more prone to be deployed to help counter such activities, both the Rangers and Raiders occasionally being used as headquarter guards, and the Alamo Scouts forming part of General Krueger's personal bodyguard and escort in New Guinea.[101]

In addition to their more familiar harassment and aggressive *coup de main* operations, the SAS Brigade in France had a common mandate to organise, train, and provide junior leadership to indigenous resistance movements. Whilst the French SAS Regiments were widely employed in such activities in Brittany (as at the 'Samwest' and 'Dingson' bases), there was a definite reluctance to burden the British SAS Regiments with such tasks lest they unduly detract from their independent offensive activities.[102] Soon after D-Day, Brigadier McLeod, commanding the SAS Brigade, warned that the SAS 'are military forces carrying out military as opposed to political tasks' and that they should not be employed 'more than necessary' in organising partisan formations.[103]

Other SOE and OSS groups would have a clearer mandate to work directly alongside the Resistance in France. One such group whose *raison d'être* were such activities, were the SOE/SO inter-Allied Jedburgh Teams. Though bearing certain conceptual similarities to both the Independent Companies and the work of Wingate's Gideon Force in Ethiopia in 1941, the idea for the creation of these groups can be traced back to May 1942 discussions between two SOE regional directors: Major Peter Wilkinson

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[100] Colonel H.V. White, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Sixth Army to General Krueger, 22 May 1944, RG 338, Records of Sixth Army G-2 Section, Box 1. The deliberately planned interception of Admiral Yamamoto's aircraft in April 1943 by USAAF aircraft from Guadalcanal, which is occasionally cited as an example of a special operation, does however dispel the notion of there being any cultural reticence towards such operations being somehow 'un-American'.
[101] Zedric, Lance Q., *Silent Warriors of World War II*, (Pathfinder: Ventura, California, 1995) pp.143-145
[102] 'Operations of the 4th French Parabattalion' (4th SAS), KCLMA McLeod; Documents of Oswald Cary-Elwes, KCLMA Cary-Elwes; Hue, André and Southby-Tailyour, Ewen, *The Next Moon*, (Penguin: London, 2004) p.67
[103] Brigadier McLeod, 'Employment of SAS Troops', 17 June 1944, WO 218/194

and Robin Brook. If indigenous partisan movements were to be of benefit to conventional Allied operations Wilkinson and Brook understood that there was a cardinal requirement for guerrilla bands to be adequately equipped and properly directed. They thus proposed the formation of dedicated uniformed specialist groups which could be dispatched into occupied territories to arm, exploit and coordinate indigenous forces in concert with the conventional campaign.[104] This concept was tested and validated in front of a multinational audience in the 'Spartan' exercises of 3-11 March 1943.[105] The OSS, Free French and Belgian representatives observing 'Spartan' had been sufficiently impressed with the concept to seek direct participation in the programme.[106] The project, soon named 'Jedburgh', thus became a multinational endeavour and recruiting proceeded from SOE, OSS, Free French, Dutch and Belgian sources with expectation that three-man teams would be created, each comprising one SOE or OSS officer, one bilingual officer (preferably native of the occupied nation), and one trained radio operator.[107]

Dispatched into France both independently, and alongside SAS and OG missions, from D minus 1 onwards the principal function of the Jedburghs remained that as first expounded in May 1942: they were to 'make contact with local authorities or existing SOE organisations, to distribute the arms, to start off the action of the patriots, and, most particularly, to arrange by W/T communication the dropping points and reception committees for further arms and equipment'.[108] Once contact had been made with partisan formations, the Jedburghs had three key areas of responsibility: 'Liaison', 'organisation' and 'leadership'.[109] They were to instruct, organise and equip the partisans whilst at the same time advise SHAEF on their capabilities. The Jedburghs would also act as reception bodies for both SAS and OG elements, and were subsequently capable of acting in a liaison capacity between these groups and the Resistance. [110] The Jedburghs were, however, considered too small and 'too precious'

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[104] SOE document, 'Co-ordination of activities behind the enemy lines with the actions of allied military forces invading N.W. Europe', 6 April 1943, HS 8/288; Foot, *SOE*, p.190
[105] OSS/London War Diaries, Vol.1, KCLMA MF 204
[106] JCS Memorandum on 'Jedburghs', 28 August 1942, RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45, Box 8; Folder *CCS 000.5*, Subversive Activity
[107] 'History of Jedburghs in Europe', HS 7/17
[108] *Ibid.*
[109] SOE/OSS Memorandum on Jedburghs, 10 March 1944, KCLMA MF 209
[110] OSS/London War Diaries, Vol.4, KCLMA MF 206; For individual Team Reports see: RG 226, Entry 103, Boxes 2 and 3; and RG 226, Entry 154, Box 56; Folder 945

to participate directly in offensive operations, which would be catered for by the SAS and OGs.[111]

The other Anglo-American special forces unit to be widely employed in support of the invasion of France were the 'French' and (in light of a lack of opportunity for original mission) 'Norwegian' OSS OGs. As has been previously noted, the OSS OGs were created to serve as 'operational nuclei' for guerrilla formations: providing a bilingual nucleus of military professionals to raise, train, support, and operate indigenous forces. The OGs did, however, have a versatile mandate and were also tasked with undertaking independent direct action and *coup de main* missions in a manner similar to that of the SAS. There were, however, obvious points of divergence between the SAS and OGs such as the linguistic talents of the OSS men and their more explicit focus on operations with partisan formations.[112] Nor did the OGs employ vehicles in the same manner as did the SAS for mobile harassment. An OSS assessment of operations in France would later indicate that in the breakout and pursuit stages of operations, the OG's absence of vehicles certainly 'limited their usefulness'.[113]

It is interesting to note that although America was willing to emulate and cater for most special forces roles as exhibited by the British, they never sought to mirror the British proclivity for mobile harassment actions. This absence is perhaps most attributable to a divergence of perception about the roles of these units. The British conception of special forces was forged from the successful and highly mobile operations undertaken in the desert. The US never had such a learning experience, and by the time of their entry in the war the potential for such activities had declined (although, as proven by the likes of the SAS or PPA, not disappeared). The US perception of special forces were instead forged at a time when partisan-sponsored actions were coming to the fore: special forces were thus viewed primarily as a reserve which could be used to harness indigenous forces in support of the main effort rather than as actors capable of independent effect. As such, there would be no requirement for US special forces to be independently mobile after initial insertion, they would operate until they were overrun by conventional arms, at which point their mission

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[111] 'The Role of Jedburghs in the Invasion of N.W. Europe', 6 June 1943, HS 8/288

[112] With obvious bias, SOE/SO London reported that: 'In comparison with the SAS, the OGs represented a more versatile and highly-trained body of men, having greater resources at their disposal for the conduct of fighting'. OSS/London War Diaries, Vol.4A, KCLMA MF 207

[113] 'Summary of Origin and Development of Resistance in France', RG 226, Entry 190, Box 741; Folder 1469; Foot, M.R.D., *SOE in France*, (HMSO: London, 1966) pp.401-402

would be accomplished. This American perception of the principal role of special forces remained throughout the war and beyond.[114]

The initial concept for use of the OGs in France proposed that they would infiltrate the coastal area and 'conduct hit and run warfare on advance enemy munitions and oil dumps, supply columns, armoured columns, and communications'.[115] As with early schemes for the SAS Brigade, such shallow deployment in a heavily defended area in which the majority of the civilian population had been removed would doubtless have resulted in only temporary results and would likely have led to heavy casualties amongst the Groups. This role was discarded before the invasion and the OGs were ultimately tasked with operating as a 'strategic reserve' to be dispatched after the initial landings into areas in which there was a clear need for their capabilities.[116] By deploying proportionately heavier weaponry, including light machine guns, mortars and modest anti-tank weaponry, the OGs were particularly well suited to reinforcing and providing 'stiffening' to both Jedburghs and the Resistance (as with 'Percy Red' or 'Louise'). Although it was projected that the OGs could undertake those offensive and *coup de main* operations which the Jedburghs were unsuited towards, few such deployments occurred in France. Most commonly, working closely with the Resistance, OGs would undertake harassment operations (such as 'Christopher' or 'Adrian') and perform counter-scorch work (as with 'Patrick', 'Lindsay' or 'Donald').[117] In France there was no 'typical' deployment for the OGs *per se*, and the objectives and results of each operation was greatly affected by the time at which they were employed, the area to which they were dispatched, and the state of readiness and composition of partisan formations therein.

It will be noted that there existed a certain inexplicit overlap between the varied roles of the OGs, Jedburghs and SAS Brigade in France. This duplication of effort, particularly over responsibilities in dealing with the Resistance, exacerbated by command and control problems (discussed later), was at times a source of confusion

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[114] The term 'Special Forces' within the modern US military is commonly taken to refer directly to the US Army Special Forces, the 'Green Berets', which were created in 1952 with the principal role of working with indigenous populations conducting 'Unconventional Warfare'.
[115] OSS Planning Group, 'Implementation study for special military plan for France (North African Theatre)', 7 September 1943, WO 204/12980
[116] OSS/London War Diaries, Vol.3, KCLMA MF 204
[117] *Ibid.*, Vol.4A; Memorandum on 'Employment of OGs in the ETO and procedure for their dispatch', 6 June 1944, KCLMA MF 209; Various OG operation reports, RG 226, Entry 143, Box 11; and Entry 148, Box 83

and animosity in the field. Jedburgh team 'Hugh', for instance, was particularly critical of the 1st SAS 'Bulbasket' mission with whom they worked. Their after-action report stated:

> .... we never considered that uniformed troops, foreign to the country and its language, could carry out sabotage in better conditions than the resistance. On the contrary, they attract far more remark, and consequently draw danger not only on themselves, but also on all the Maquis in the region. .... The employment of 'Jeeps' by the SAS at that early stage, showed how little they appreciated the true position.[118]

The manner in which the SAS dealt with the Resistance could be a particular matter of contention for the Jedburghs. With scant regard for politics the SAS were generally willing to 'assist any group, no matter what its political persuasion, to obtain arms if it showed any sign of wanting to use them to kill Germans'.[119] Jedburgh 'Frederick' found it 'very difficult' to work with the SAS 'Samwest' operation because 'they had ideas about arming the partisans and rather intruded on our job. We do not mind the maximum number of men being armed naturally, but when hasty preparations are made and the parachutings fail the effect is bad on the Maquis'.[120] In the field the SAS were also prone to take command of the Resistance, something that ran contrary to the Jedburgh's mandate to only provide direct leadership when essential. Furthermore, it was a role that, as Mackenzie emphasised, the 'admirable thugs of the SAS were not selected or trained for ... some of their rank and file seem to have been a little heavy-handed in their dealings with the natives'.[121] Such problems were not, however, universal. In stark contrast to Jedburgh team 'Frederick's' findings, for example, team 'George' found the SAS 'Dingson' base very capable of operating with the resistance claiming they 'worked wonderfully .... [the SAS] was never a nuisance or a burden to us'.[122]

Following the breakout of Normandy and the development of a fluid Allied offensive the opportunity to use special forces in depth declined with the advancing front. In this situation the function of the SAS, after some speculation, became the provision of

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[118] 'Jedburgh Team Chronologies', RG 226, Entry 190, Box 740; Folder 1462
[119] Ford (2003), p.32
[120] 'Jedburgh Team Chronologies', *op. cit.*; see also: Kehoe, Robert R., 'An Allied Team with the French Resistance – Jed Team Frederick', *Studies in Intelligence*, Winter 1998-1999
[121] Mackenzie, p.605
[122] 'Jedburgh Team Chronologies', *op. cit.*

jeep-based reconnaissance at the point of advancing Allied armies.[123] In a manner akin to the use of 2nd SAS Regiment in Italy during 1943, their role became 'similar to that of a reconnaissance regiment as there was not ... any requirement for jeep parties to break through and operate behind the lines.'[124] An exception to these later deployments in Belgium, Holland and Germany was Major Farran's newly created 3rd Squadron of the 2nd SAS which in December 1944 began conducting operations in depth in Northern Italy.[125] After France a number of Jedburghs were deployed to Holland and seven teams dropped in support of 'Market Garden', others were sent to Italy, Yugoslavia and Burma.[126] Plans for Jedburgh deployments in Denmark, China and Malaya, although advanced, were never put into effect.

Although the OG deployments in France highlight well their function alongside resistance elements, it is their extensive, but generally ignored, employment in other theatres that best highlights their overall versatility. The earliest OG deployments were in the Italian theatre, but initially bore little relation to their principal mandate to set up and lead indigenous guerrilla forces.[127] In October 1943 personnel of the 'Italian' Groups participated in the liberation of Corsica helping both in gaining the complicity of the Italian garrison and in harrying the German withdrawal.[128] Corsica subsequently became the headquarters for 'French' and 'Italian' OG operations and from the island these Groups, often in co-operation with Free French forces, mounted a number of 'highly successful and effective' small-scale reconnaissance, shipping watch, and offensive sabotage raids against the coasts of southern France, northern Italy, and various western Mediterranean islands.[129] It was not until July 1944 that AFHQ became willing to exploit the value of Italian partisans and, coinciding with the

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[123] SAS Brigade 'Sitreps', December 1944-March 1945, RG 331, Entry 30, Box 135; Folder 370.2-4; Thompson (1998), p.333

[124] Lieutenant-Colonel Collins, 'Notes on the Organisation, History and Employment of SAS Troops', May 1945, KCLMA McLeod

[125] Farran, p.279; Further exception can be noted with the deployment of the French SAS Battalions, via parachute, in small groups into Holland to aid the advance of the First Canadian Army. The depth of these operations were, nevertheless, far shallower than the deployments in France.

[126] Summary of Jedburgh Operations, RG 226, Entry 101, Box 1; Brown, Arthur, *The Jedburghs*, (Unpublished memoir, 1991) p.16 in IWM Brown 03/24/1; Thompson (1998), p.404

[127] The January 1943 conception of the OGs had, however, advised that until work could be conducted with indigenous guerrillas, the Groups should aim to 'supplement the work of invasion forces and sabotage units and, in the interim, ... be used in commando and combined operations work on "one shot targets" or "coup-de-main" projects'. OSS/London War Diaries, Vol.8, KCLMA MF 208

[128] History of 'Italian' OGs in: RG 226, Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 146; Obolensky, p.279

[129] MEDTO 'Pouch Reviews' and 'Cable reports' for 1944-45, RG 226, Entry 99, Box 35; Reports on 'Italian' OGs, RG 226, Entry 99, Box 45; Folders 6 and 7; various documents, RG 226, Entry 97, Box 40; 226, Entry 143, Box 10; and WO 204/12836

upsurge in partisan activities elsewhere in Europe, these OGs began to undertake the tasks for which they originally had been created. From this point onwards small teams of OGs were widely deployed throughout northern Italy and Slovenia to coordinate and support partisan formations and disrupt enemy communications.[130]

The most varied of OG operations were undertaken by the 'Greek' and 'Yugoslav' Groups. In early-1944 just over one-hundred OG personnel were sent to the island of Vis to serve alongside No.2 Commando where their role became similar to that of the LRDG and SBS in the Aegean, including both offensive raids against neighbouring islands and shipping, often mounted alongside Commandos and Yugoslav partisans, as well as the establishment of radio stations and shipping watches.[131] From April 1944 the 'Greek' OGs were deployed as part of the 'Noah's Ark' operation to harass the German withdrawal from Greece. Inserted into Greece and Albania these OGs, often in co-operation with elements of the British Raiding Support Regiment (RSR), conducted a protracted series of operations to interdict key highways and railroads and provide 'supporting fire' and assistance to Andartes partisans.[132] Raised in October 1943, the RSR was to provide additional fire support to both partisans and the specialist units forming part of 'Raiding Forces Middle East' and Force 133 in the Adriatic.[133] Equipped with a range of proportionately heavy direct- and indirect-fire weaponry, the RSR was also capable of undertaking independent offensive action missions, as seen with their late-1944 operations along the Dalmatian Coast, and their participation in the 'Noah's Ark' operations in Greece.[134]

Arriving in Britain in December 1943 the Norwegian OGs, like both the FSSF and No.14 Commando before them, had little opportunity to deploy against Norway. Instead, a deficit of trained personnel available for deployment to France would ensure that they would deploy alongside the 'French' OGs. This was a course of action that showed that although the linguistic talents of the OGs were not always of tangible value, the personnel involved were sufficiently versatile. It would not be until early-1945 that the men of the Norwegian OGs, reorganised into the NORSO (Norwegian

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[130] History of 'Italian' OGs, RG 226, Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 146, p.17; Reports of 'Italian' OGs in: WO 204/7289
[131] Major-General W.B. Smith, Chief of Staff to OSS Italy, 3 October 1943, WO 204/10392
[132] Major Fred Bielaski, CO 'Greek' OG, Operational reports, 24 December 1944, RG 226, Entry 99, Box 45; Folder 4
[133] GHQ MEF to Brigadier Turnbull, November 1943, WO 201/797
[134] RSR and Force 399 Situation Reports, 1944, WO 170/1364

Special Operations) Group, were able to deploy, albeit on a limited scale, against Norway for the conduct of *coup de main* operations against rail networks and bridges.[135]

The Far Eastern theatre would become as prolific a playground of Allied special forces as was France and the Mediterranean. The initial shock of Japanese gains in theatre had resulted in a spirit of *ad hoc* proliferation of 'mobs for jobs' which was certainly analogous to that occurring in the Desert War 1940-1941. Fine example of such, is the creation of 'Force Viper' during the Japanese invasion of Burma in January 1942. Created under Major Duncan Johnston 'Force Viper' comprised a composite group of Royal Marines in Ceylon, formerly of MNBDO 1, who volunteered to patrol the Gulf of Martaban to help prevent the advancing Japanese from encircling the retreating British forces. Utilising an improvised flotilla (consisting of motor launches and a paddle steamer) the Force would harass the enemy's advance, guard the flanks of the retreating 17th Division across the Irrawaddy, and conduct raids and demolitions with Major Mike Calvert's 2nd Burma 'Commando' (another scratch force).[136] Of the 107 men who embarked on these operations 58 eventually made it back to India at which time the *ad hoc* force was disbanded.[137] Equally illustrative are those hastily arranged stay behind parties in Malaya orchestrated by No.101 Special Training School (a branch of SOE) which conducted harassment and sabotage operations amongst indigenous guerrillas following the Japanese advances.[138]

In September 1942, before concepts such as the OGs had been properly solidified, OSS activated its first operational detachment of the war: Detachment 101. This group, which ultimately would become the most extensive American special forces 'unit' used during the war, began as a group of less than thirty men seeking to conduct intelligence and sabotage operations in Stilwell's CBI theatre. Ultimately deployed to northern Burma, the Detachment forged links with anti-Japanese Kachin tribesmen whom they armed and formed into units of 'Kachin Rangers'. The Detachment initially focused on establishing intricate intelligence networks but gradually, and especially with the commencement of Stilwell's Burma Road offensive, broadened their role with

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[135] OSS/London War Diaries, Vol.8, KCLMA MF 209
[136] Hampshire, A. Cecil, 'The Exploits of Force Viper', *The RUSI Journal*, (February 1968), pp.41-50
[137] Documents of Major Duncan Johnston, KCLMA Johnston D
[138] For a personal account of such actions, see: Chapman, F. Spencer, *The Jungle is Neutral*, (Granada: London, 1977)

an emphasis on ambushing and harassing Japanese forces and in providing guides and screens for both British and Chinese regular forces as well as for the Chindits and Marauders.[139] Detachment 101 underwent significant expansion during the war, with their number approaching some one-thousand men by 1945. Alongside this growth, the Detachment became the nominal OSS mounting authority in theatre, and with the subsequent attachment of both Maritime Unit (discussed below) and OG veterans from Europe, its potential repertoire of roles gradually increased.[140]

Detachment 101 also established extensive networks for the recovery of Allied pilots downed over Burma which, over the course of the war, succeeded in returning 425 downed airmen to Allied lines.[141] Furthermore, on the eve of the Japanese surrender a number of personnel formerly of Detachment 101 (which had been deactivated in July 1945) were chosen to parachute into Japanese POW camps to help ensure the correct treatment of allied prisoners therein.[142] SHAEF had formed a unit with a similar role on 29 March 1945: the 'Special Allied Airborne Reconnaissance Force' (SAARF). Operating from 25 April SAARF deployed three-man multinational 'contact and reconnaissance teams' by parachute and land infiltration into POW camps in Germany.[143]

In southern Burma SOE (after the creation of SEAC known, in theatre, as Force 136) was paralleling Detachment 101's operations in the north and were broadly successful in harnessing the local Karen populations into guerrilla forces. Of particular note was their operation 'Character', launched in February 1945, in which Force 136, supported by Jedburgh teams, sponsored and led a large-scale Karen uprising across southern Burma to harass the withdrawal of the Japanese 15th Division.[144] Also of significance in this theatre, specifically along the Indo-Burmese border, was 'V Force'. Originally raised in April 1942 as the 'Assam Organisation' from British Army personnel and elements of the Assam rifles (armed police), its purpose was to recruit local tribesmen

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[139] History of OSS Detachment 101 by Lieutenant-Colonel Peers, CO, November 1944, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 70; Folder 92-TF-1-0.2; Hilsman, Roger, *American Guerrilla*, (Potomac Books: Washington D.C., 2005)
[140] Dennis J. Roberts, Acting Chief, MU to Major Carl O. Hoffmann, 28 October 1943, RG 226, Entry 92, Box 490; Folder 27; OSS Planning Group 'Over-all and Special Programs for Strategic Services Activities in SEAC', 24 May 1944, RG 226, Entry 144, Box 70; Folder 630
[141] Hilsman, p.125
[142] *Ibid.* p.232
[143] SAARF War Diary, RG 226, Entry 101, Box 2; Folder 48; Report on SAARF, 10 July 1945, WO 193/673; various documents, RG 331, Entry 56, Box 158; Folder 322 SAARF
[144] See Dear, pp.197-208

and operate as a post-occupational stay behind force. Deployment saw 'this polyglot band of endearing thugs', at times alongside Detachment 101 and Detachment 404 (an OSS mounting authority in southern Burma and Southeast Asia),[145] do 'magnificent work' for Fourteenth Army providing accurate, if occasionally sporadic, intelligence on enemy movements; acting as guides and pathfinders; and deploying in a harassment capacity.[146] In China, the US Navy operated a similar organisation known first as US Naval Group China, and later as SACO (Sino-American Cooperative Organisation), under Commander Milton E. Miles. Predating Detachment 101, it had a similar role in organising and providing training for Chinese guerrillas as well as the unique role of establishing meteorological stations and providing trained weathermen to monitor developing weather patterns over China for the benefit of Allied naval and air elements in the Pacific.[147]

Perhaps the most versatile example of an independent US special forces unit raised during the war was the Sixth Army Special Reconnaissance Unit, or the Alamo Scouts. The Scouts arose to fill a gap caused by inadequacies of conventional forces, and the motivation, if not the mechanism, behind their creation was certainly analogous to that behind the establishment of the LRDG in 1940.[148] Their 'champion' and, in the American model, architect of their design was Lieutenant-General Walter Krueger, GOC Sixth Army, who in late-1943 was 'concerned about the lack of reliable ground intelligence available to his command. .... Such intelligence was hard to obtain in the dense jungles of the Southwest Pacific'.[149] Although Krueger benefited from intelligence from Australian Coastwatchers and US maritime-orientated special reconnaissance units, problems with the dissemination of such intelligence led Krueger to identify a need for a special intelligence unit that would be at his personal disposal.[150] In November 1943, having canvassed ideas from other formations, Krueger tasked Lieutenant-Colonel Frederick Bradshaw with creating the Alamo Scouts Training Center ('Alamo' was the codename of Sixth Army) in New Guinea.[151]

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[145] Major Adam M. Wyant, Operations Officer, 'History of Detachment 404 Operations', 21 September 1945, RG 226, Entry 99, Box 64
[146] War Diary of HQ 3rd SS Brigade, DEFE 2/53; Folder 1; Bowen, John, *Undercover in the Jungle*, (William Kimber: London, 1978) p.102; Seymour, p.58; Thompson, Julian, *The Imperial War Museum Book of the War in Burma, 1942-1945*, (Sidgwick and Jackson: London, 2002) pp.94; 138
[147] Zedric and Dilley, p.167
[148] Historical Record, RG 338, Records of Sixth Army G-2 Section, Box 7, pp.12-13
[149] Hogan, *Raiders*, p.82
[150] Krueger, Walter, *From down under to Nippon*, (Zenger: Washington D.C., 1979) p.29
[151] Zedric, pp.41; 51

The purpose of the Training Center was to qualify Sixth Army volunteers 'for the efficient performance of scouting and patrolling duties under all conditions of terrain, weather, and vegetation found in the Southwest Pacific; and to train teams capable of landing near, and reconnoitring, areas of future operations'.[152] Only a proportion of the personnel graduating from the Center would be formed into Scout units whilst the remainder were returned to their units to disseminate the techniques learned. This approach was unique to American formations and, as has been noted, was also the motivation behind the creation of the Rangers: to improve the whole by training the few.

The primary purpose of the Scouts was, like the LRDG, the provision of human intelligence via small four- to eight-man patrols, and the undertaking of road and coastal watches.[153] Deployment in the Southwest Pacific ensured that the unit would have a strong amphibious focus and would be called upon to supply both military intelligence as well as, as at Leyte, to furnish information on beaches and topography, and prepare maps. The Scouts were also excellent guides for both conventional and specialised forces, as illustrated by their reconnaissance and guidance of the 6th Rangers for their raid on Cabantuan. Deployment in the Philippines saw the Scout's role expand with the unit liaising with guerrillas and organising intelligence networks. Although the Scouts were 'specifically indoctrinated with the idea of avoiding combat except when essential to the accomplishment of their mission', their inherent flexibility ensured that small-scale raids, roving ambushes, and demolitions were all part of their intended repertoire. The October 1944 raid on a prison camp on Moari in New Guinea to rescue thirty-two natives is a good example of their more aggressive capabilities.[154]

In addition to the various special forces mentioned above, both Britain and the US would develop an extensive range of maritime-orientated special forces. As compared to the broad, and at times indistinct, roles of land-orientated special forces, maritime special forces tended to have better defined, more individualistic, roles that were subject to much less transition. Despite this, with little or no precedent to follow, the

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[152] Shelton, George R., 'The Alamo Scouts,' *Armor*, Vol. 91, (September-October 1982), pp.29-30
[153] Breuer, William B., *MacArthur's Undercover War*, (John Wiley: Chichester, 1995) p.147; Zedric, pp.150-151
[154] For information on operations, see: RG 338, Records of Sixth Army G-2 Section, Box 7, pp.13-16; Zedric, p.75; McRaven, William H., *SPEC OPS – Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare*, (Presido: Novato, 1995) pp.152-254; Hogan, *US Army*, p.82

earliest maritime focused special forces were, like the first land-orientated examples, by no means inflexible in the roles that they were intended to undertake.

The first maritime special force conceived during the war was the Special Boat Service (SBS) created in July 1940. Its inception, analogous to many early British formations, occurred at the hands of an 'errant captain': Lieutenant Roger Courtney, pre-war game hunter and experienced canoeist.[155] As a member of No.8 Commando training in Scotland, Courtney developed ideas about the military potential of canoe-based raids and reconnaissance and promptly illustrated these to sceptical superiors with a successful, if unorthodox, demonstration. Admiral Keyes, DCO was impressed, promoted Courtney and allowed him to raise a 12 man 'Folbot Section' for his Commando.[156] Sent to the Mediterranean with the 'Layforce' Commando group this Section would be renamed 1st SBS in April 1941. The unit was subsequently attached to the 1st and 10th Submarine Flotillas in Alexandria and Malta where SBS pairs were given *carte blanche* to undertake operations during submarine sorties as and when opportunities arose.[157] Throughout 1941 they undertook an extensive range of operations that broadened their initial role to include beach reconnaissance, pilotage, sabotage operations, raids and personnel transport.[158] Their attachment to submarines ended after a year, and following a period of costly operations that made continued independent existence difficult, the unit became linked to 'L' Detachment SAS in a 'shotgun marriage'.[159]

As if to highlight the inevitability of the SBS idea, almost concurrent to the creation of Courtney's unit, No.6 Commando had also independently conceived of, and created, its own Folbot troop, known as 101 Troop, for much the same purpose. Operating from mainland Britain, however, the Troop was not afforded the same *ad hoc* flexibility that the 1st SBS achieved in its attachment to submarines in the Mediterranean, and its operations were confined to sporadic attacks on enemy shipping using 'Limpet' mines and limited reconnaissances of the French coast, tasks often hampered by unsuitable weather and water conditions.[160] In May 1942 calls for the expansion of the SBS led to

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[155] Courtney, G.B., *SBS in World War Two*, (Robert Hale: London, 1983) p.23
[156] The folbot was a form of folding canoe. It is occasionally referred to as a folboat or a foldboat.
[157] Parker, John, *SBS – The Inside Story of the Special Boat Service*, (Headline: London, 1998) p.26
[158] For various SBS operations, see: DEFE 2/970
[159] Thompson (1998), p.74
[160] Papers of Brigadier Gerald Montanaro, KCLMA Montanaro; 'Past, Present, and Future Activities of the Special Boat Section', 23 November 1943, DEFE 2/740

101 Troop be re-designed the 2nd SBS. Sent to the Mediterranean, 2nd SBS mirrored the versatility of its forebear by carrying out a number of diverse intelligence-and offensive-orientated roles. Soon after the 2nd SBS's creation, Major Guy Courtney (brother of Roger) formed 'Z' SBS that retained close links with submarine flotillas and undertook many clandestine reconnaissance and transportation roles, most notably landing General Mark Clark in North Africa and recovering General Giraud from France.[161] Later, in 1944, when deployed to the Far East the 'A', 'B', and 'C' SBS groups, each formed around a nucleus of experienced SBS personnel who had served in Europe, managed to maintain a flexible and innovative approach to both offensive action, reconnaissance and transportation tasks along the Arakan coastline and the Chindwin and Irrawaddy rivers.[162] 'Z' SBS, also sent to the Far Eastern theatre in mid-1944, would primarily conduct ferrying and clandestine operations with Force 136.[163]

Soon after the inception of the SBS and 101 Troop yet more maritime special forces with an offensive mandate developed, each justifying their independent existence by the provision of a niche role or technique. In November 1940 another 'errant captain', Major H.G. 'Blondie' Hasler, RM 'a natural small boat man' who sought to emulate the success of Italian 'human torpedo' attacks, wrote a paper to the Admiralty 'proposing a method of attack on ships in harbour employing a type of single-seater submersible canoe manned by a shallow water diver'. Analogous to the fate of Bagnold's first suggestions for the LRDG, both this paper and a subsequent one (emphasising reconnaissance) submitted in May 1941, were rejected as being impracticable and unwarranted.[164] It was not until the effectiveness of Italian developments were vividly illustrated by the successful attacks on the Battleships *Queen Elizabeth* and *Valiant* in Alexandria Harbour on 14 December 1941 that the establishment was suitably shocked into action.[165]

Hasler was subsequently attached to the Combined Operations Development Centre (CODC) with the task 'to study, co-ordinate and develop all methods of stealthy seaborne attack by very small parties'. Having spent much time developing and

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[161] Captain R.P. Livingstone, SBS to Captain (S) 8th Submarine Flotilla, 30 March 1943, DEFE 2/740; Reports for the historical record of SBU, 26 January 1944, DEFE 2/1035; Major G.B. Courtney, OC 'Z' SBS Reports of Mediterranean operations, September 1943, DEFE 2/1036
[162] 'Report of activities of 'B' Group Special Boat Section attached to 21 (East African) Brigade', 25 November 1944, DEFE 2/970
[163] Major G.B. Courtney, 'Z' SBS to COHQ, 14 April 1944, DEFE 2/970
[164] Admiralty report on RMBPD, June 1944, ADM 1/21986
[165] Major H.G. Hasler, OC RMBPD on 'General Situation', 14 September 1943, DEFE 2/742

trialling an explosive motor boat of the kind of which had been demonstrated by the Italians (named the 'Boom Patrol Boat'); Hasler believed the best way to employ these craft would be to use 'Cockle' canoes alongside them to negotiate enemy harbour boom defences. Believing that it was necessary to develop the use of Cockles and the BPBs within a single unit to ensure the best possible cohesion, on 6 July 1942 Mountbatten would accordingly authorise Hasler to recruit 46 men and form the Royal Marine Boom Patrol Detachment (RMBPD).[166] The niche specialisation, and sole operational occupation, (in which Major Hasler hoped to gain a level of proficiency unsurpassed by any other formation) of the Detachment was to be the attack of dock installations and ships in harbour utilising new CODC technologies.[167]

The first deployment of the RMBPD, operation 'Frankton', is easily their most noteworthy action. Mounted in December 1942 it was a bold but costly attempt to attack blockade running shipping in the docks of Bordeaux. Although neither the target nor method of attack was truly unique (in April 1942 101 Troop had sunk a 7,000 ton tanker in Boulogne harbour using such means)[168], in both depth of deployment and in method of exfiltration, however, the operation is almost without parallel.[169] Transported via submarine to the mouth of the Gironde River, the unit deployed canoes to paddle the entire length of the watercourse to reach their targets before having to escape and evade overland through France to Spain. Out of the ten 'Cockleshell Heroes' that launched their canoes, it was a feat managed by only Hasler and his partner Bill Sparks.[170] In late-1943 the RMBPD was sent for service with 'Raiding Forces Middle East' where they would undertake a number of sporadic deployments, the most notable of which being their successful attack on two German destroyers near Leros in June 1944 which facilitated the SBS (Squadron) and Greek Sacred Squadron's raid on Simi in July.[171] The activity in which the RMBPD was most active, however, was their non-operational provision of personnel for the development and trial of new

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[166] Lieutenant-Colonel H.F.G. Langley, Commandant CODC to CCO, 12 May 1942, DEFE 2/988
[167] COHQ Docket, 'Command and Administration of RMBPD', 22 November 1942, DEFE 2/953; RMBPD War Diary, ADM 202/310
[168] Major G.C.S. Montanaro to Lieutenant-General R.P. Pakenham-Walsh, 10 September 1950, File 101/Gs/1 in KCLMA Montanaro
[169] The only operations of a vaguely similar nature were the 'Jaywick' and 'Rimau' operations conducted by the predominantly Australian 'Z Special Unit' of the SRD of AIB against Singapore in September 1943 and September 1944, respectively. Courtney, G.B, *Silent Fleet – The History of 'Z' Special Operations, 1942-45*, (R.J. & S.P. Austin: McRae, 1993); McDonald, Gabrielle, *New Zealand's Secret Heroes*, (Reed: Auckland, 1991)
[170] Lucas Phillips, C.E., *Cockleshell Heroes*, (Pan Books: London, 1956) p.59
[171] Pitt (1983), p.149; Reports on operation 'Tenement', July 1944, WO 201/2831

equipment and technologies, such as the BPBs and 'sleeping beauty' submersible attack craft.[172]

Another offensively-minded British maritime special forces formation with a niche role was the Sea Reconnaissance Unit (SRU).[173] Predictably, the idea for its inception came from one junior officer, Lieutenant Bruce S. Wright, RCNVR. An experienced pre-war swimmer, Wright was patrolling a Newfoundland harbour boom in January 1941 when he struck upon the idea that teams of 'abalone divers' could be used to infiltrate harbours and attack shipping therein with mines. Although the Italians had used similar methods against Gibraltar, Wright claimed no knowledge of this fact. Submitting his ideas to COHQ, Wright was eventually called to Britain to demonstrate his proposed methods. Upon arrival Mountbatten sent him to the RMBPD to see if they could adapt to his techniques but it was soon made apparent that the requirements of canoe-specialists were not the same as those for combat swimmers. Mountbatten thus permitted Wright to form a 40 man unit from scratch. Hasler dutifully helped him recruit his force.[174]

Like the RMBPD, the SRU had gained establishment by forging a unique approach to existent tasks. Its niche was the use of both surface and underwater combat swimmers to undertake offensive and intelligence tasks against 'objectives not otherwise attainable by canoes or other craft'.[175] Training in California and Nassau had accustomed the unit to tropical conditions something which later precluded their deployment in coldwater operations from Britain before D-Day.[176] Eventually being deployed to SEAC, from February 1945 the SRU retained its unique tactical approach to undertake small-scale reconnaissance and offensive raids against river and shoreline targets in Burma.[177] Joining these other maritime special forces in the Far East in early-1945 was Royal Marine Detachment 385. Raised in March 1944, the Detachment was to specialise in the full gamut of small boat work including offensive, intelligence and transportation tasks.[178] Comprising eight troops, each of thirty men, it was to conduct

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[172] Major Hasler to CCO, 16 August 1942, DEFE 2/988
[173] Briefly called the Sea Reconnaissance Section.
[174] Wright, Bruce S., *The Frogmen of Burma*, (William Kimber: London, 1970) pp.20-35
[175] GOC SS Group, 'Administration of SBU', 28 October 1943, DEFE 2/1035
[176] Wright, p.71
[177] Minutes of 260th SEAC Meeting, 8 July 1945, WO 203/131; Wright, p.104
[178] GOC Royal Marines, Administrative Instruction No.252 on formation of RM Detachment 385, 2 March 1944, DEFE 2/1203; Oakley, Derek, *Behind Japanese Lines*, (Royal Marines Historical Society: Portsmouth, 1996) p.11

operations requiring greater strength than was possible with the other smaller maritime special forces.[179] The nature of Detachment 385's deployments has definite similarities to the actions of a 'special' OG which had been raised in early-1944 for reconnaissance and ferrying operations in this theatre.[180]

Contrasted with the British, the US developed *offensive* special maritime capabilities comparatively late in the day, and when they did so they were heavily influenced by the British. This delay in creation did, however, ensure that when America began to develop such capabilities they occurred, as with the OGs, in a centralised manner, under the OSS Maritime Unit (MU) branch, instead of the cumbersome variety of disparate formations which had proliferated in Britain. Despite the confusing nomenclature, the MU was not a coherent formation but was instead, as with the OGs, an OSS operating branch comprising a collection of different elements each responsible for a slightly different operational niche or area of operation.

The creation of the MU owes much to the British example. In February 1942 Commander H.G.A. Woolley, an experienced British naval officer and advisor on combined operations to the British Joint Staff Mission in Washington, was loaned to COI to advise Donovan 'on British methods of training operatives and raiding forces'. In late-April 1942 Woolley suggested that COI establish a maritime training school for clandestine agents and thus with his guidance 'Area D' was created on the Potomac near Quantico.[181] By January 1943 this fledgling organisation had become the OSS MU and, placed under the aegis of the larger SO branch, began to take responsibility for the development of specialised equipment and the organisation of operational units. In June 1943 the MU was granted branch status that enabled it to put personnel into the field.[182]

The MU had three broad responsibilities: 'clandestine ferrying', 'maritime sabotage' and, from October 1943 (following a split with the OSS main R&D branch), the trial and development of new technologies in a manner similar to that of the RMBPD.[183] The 'clandestine ferrying' branch of the MU was broadly responsible for catering to all

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[179] CCO brief on Special Parties in SEAC, October 1944, DEFE 2/1035; Record of SOG, SEAC, March 1946, DEFE 2/1747
[180] SEAC OG Operational Narratives, RG 226, Entry 144, Box 70
[181] History of the OSS MU, RG 226, Entry 99, Box 98; Folder 4, p.5
[182] *Ibid.* p.16
[183] *Ibid.* p.19

OSS small boat needs including the infiltration of clandestine personnel and supply of resistance groups. The first deployment of the MU in this role came with the establishment in Cairo of a clandestine ferry service for Greece and the Aegean. Its role was, however, limited by an absence of suitable craft and competition with various other agencies charged with the same role, including 'Z' SBS and the Admiralty's 'Levant Schooner Flotilla'.[184]

In October 1943 the MU had created a 'special maritime group' closely mirroring the role and composition of the British SRU. This group underwent offensive swimming and 'frogman' training in close conjunction with the SRU in both California and Nassau before a proportion of it was dispatched to Britain for deployment. Their use from Britain was, however, greatly hamstrung by a number of problems with weather and water conditions (as experienced by the SRU) as well as by the general absence of US shipping from which to mount independent operations; a common impediment to the use of US maritime special forces in all theatres bar the Pacific.[185] This group was subsequently sent to Burma in an effort to extend Detachment 101's operational repertoire and, later still, elements would join an expanded MU organisation in Ceylon as a part of Detachment 404 to conduct clandestine transportation tasks analogous to those performed by 'Z' SBS for Force 136.[186]

The individual MU group that had the most frequent and versatile deployment was that commanded by Lieutenant Richard Kelly in the Italian theatre. Working from June 1944 onwards this group benefited considerably from the attachment of experienced Italian personnel formerly of the 'San Marco Battalion' to its ranks.[187] The first deployments of this group were the 'Ossining' series of operations against the coast of northern Italy and Istria which, somewhat analogous to early SBS deployments,

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[184] History of the OSS MU in the Middle East, July 1943 to March 1945, RG 226, Entry 99, Box 54; Folder 4; Benyon-Tinker, W. E., *Dust Upon the Sea*, (Hodder and Stoughton: London, 1947) pp.13-14

[185] Lieutenant C. Gilpatric, Executive Officer MU London to Lieutenant D.J. Roberts, Chief MU, 23 January 1944, RG 226, Entry 144, Box 72; Folder 4; Lieutenant-Commander R.R. Guest, Chief MU London, 'The L-Unit', 10 March 1944, RG 226, Entry 148, Box 83; Folder 1200

[186] History of the OSS MU, RG 226, Entry 99, Box 98; Folder 4, pp.18-19

[187] The San Marco Battalion was an Italian special forces unit comprising two elements, one trained in underwater sabotage swimming and the other in small boat operations, surface swimming, and the attack of land-based targets. In mid-1944 those Italian personnel willing to cooperate were attached to the Allies: the underwater specialists sent to work with COHQ and SOE whilst those focused on small-boat and overland deployments were predominantly attached to OSS. Lieutenant William H. Pendleton, Chief MU NATO, 'MU Report for Period 16-30 April 1944', RG 226, Entry 143, Box 5; Folder 77

involved seaborne infiltration for the destruction of coastal roads and railways.[188] This group would subsequently be widely employed in a range of offensive, intelligence-orientated and ferrying tasks that were conducted alongside, or for the benefit of, partisans, Allied subversive agencies, and other special forces.[189]

Not all specialist seaborne units were created with an offensive expedient in mind, however, and a far more important requirement was the provision of beach reconnaissance and assault pilotage. It was a field in which Britain and the US independently of one another would simultaneously develop parallel capabilities. The British pioneer in this field was Nigel Clogstoun-Willmott, RN. Having taken part in the Norwegian campaign, Willmott understood the complexities of amphibious warfare and the value of beach reconnaissance in its conduct.[190] In March 1941 Willmott was appointed Navigational Officer for proposed amphibious landings against Rhodes, and in this position he persuaded GHQ MEF to allow him to conduct a survey of the island's beaches via canoe, something that he did alongside Major Roger Courtney of the SBS.[191] This was, however, a unique experiment. Despite Willmott and Courtney maintaining some unofficial liaison and the SBS's conducting occasional limited military reconnaissances, there were, at this time, no concerted moves to develop a dedicated beach reconnaissance and survey capability.[192]

The requirement for such units received increased attention following inadequacies of hydrographic and beach reconnaissance during the Dieppe raid where 'the gradient of the shingle beach was calculated from a post card of the sea front'.[193] With operation 'Torch' in the pipeline the need to rectify such deficiencies became even more pronounced. Thus in mid-September 1942 Willmott was ordered to raise a formation to fulfil these tasks. This formation, made up of naval volunteers that had been trained by the SBS in small boat techniques,[194] comprised two groups: 'Koodoo' which sought to

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[188] Colonel William P. Davis, Chief of Operations to OSS Italy, 13 November 1944, WO 204/12984; Lieutenant Kelly, Chief, MU AAI, Report on 'Ossining', 30 June 1944, RG 226, Entry 143, Box 5; Folder 77

[189] Lieutenant Pendelton to Chief MU Washington, 28 June 1944, RG 226, Entry 143, Box 5; Folder 77; Lieutenant Kelly, 'Operational Report, February 1945', 2 March 1945, RG 226, Entry 143, Box 6, Folder 96

[190] Thompson (1998), p.46

[191] Ladd (1978), p.58

[192] Outline history of COPPs prepared for War Diary, 26 November 1943, DEFE 2/1116

[193] Fowler, Will, *The Commandos at Dieppe*, (Harper Collins: London, 2002) p.47

[194] The SBS took umbrage to the formation of a separate and hurriedly-formed unit for these purposes and believed that they, with two year's experience, were more than capable of these tasks. Captain G.B. Courtney, SBS to Brigadier Laycock, September 1942, File 9 in KCLMA Laycock

perform pre-invasion reconnaissance; and 'Inhuman' which was to undertake approach marking and pilotage.[195] Although 'Koodoo's' reconnaissance was, in light of security concerns, limited to that undertaken by periscope only, 'Inhuman' performed well and, from their perspective, 'the Assault operation was a great success'.[196] Although following 'Torch' 'Koodoo-Inhuman' was disbanded, the value of such units had been established. Subsequently, on 27 November 1942 Willmott was given responsibility for forming a proper organisation and of supervising the creation of nine Combined Operations Pilotage Parties (COPPs).[197] Their role, as broadly defined, was before an assault to 'provide all the non-air-photo reconnaissance required' on both main and subsidiary beaches, and during the assault to provide 'pilotage, assault marking, demolition guides, mine guide, and Royal Engineer assault guide duties'.[198]

From 'Torch' onwards (Koodoo-Inhuman's forays inclusive) such roles had become considered an essential prerequisite to all future major amphibious actions and COPPs would serve in all major European amphibious landings (bar Anvil/Dragoon) and would participate widely in numerous smaller operations in the Adriatic, Aegean and Mediterranean. Prior to 'Overlord' COPP teams undertook both offshore soundings from LCNs as well as shore-side canoe and swimmer reconnaissances from the newly-developed 'X-Craft' four-man submersibles. Later, in the subsequent drive on Germany, the European COPPs would be called upon to undertake reconnaissances of the Rhine and Elbe rivers. From Autumn-1944 COPP teams had been deployed to the Far East in preparation for both projected amphibious landings as well as numerous river crossings.[199] This theatre also saw COPPs occasionally perform more diverse activities removed from their initial mandate, such as COPP 3's demolition of mines and stakes obstructing a landing on the Myebon Peninsula in January 1945;[200] or COPP 9's participation in overland reconnaissance in conjunction with OSS agents and indigenous forces in April 1945.[201]

American developments in beach reconnaissance and pilotage although developing broadly independently of the British, would occur at almost the same time. USMC and

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[195] Lieutenant-Commander Willmott to Naval Commander in Chief, Expeditionary Force, 20 September 1942, DEFE 2/741
[196] Outline history of COPPs prepared for War Diary, 26 November 1943, DEFE 2/1116
[197] Minutes of COHQ meeting, 27 November 1942, DEFE 2/4
[198] Reports for the historical record of SBU, 26 January 1944, DEFE 2/1035
[199] COPP War Diary, DEFE 2/741; documents in ADM 179/347; DEFE 2/1101
[200] Outline history of COPPs prepared for War Diary, 26 November 1943, DEFE 2/1116
[201] Lieutenant I. Morison, CO COPP 9, Report on 'Natkan', 17 April 1945, DEFE 2/1204

Army landing exercises conducted on New River, North Carolina in July-August 1941 had highlighted the initial requirement for these units.[202] Consequently, Colonel Lewis B. Ely was assigned the task of developing reconnaissance and marking capabilities and began to perform trials on a variety of techniques including the deployment of small reconnaissance groups from submarines. Rudimentary assault pilotage techniques began to be developed from March 1942 from the 'Boat pool' of the Amphibious Training Base (ATB) at Solomons Island, Maryland, and subsequently, at Ely's recommendation another ATB was set up in Little Creek, Virginia where assorted volunteers created the Amphibious Scout and Raider School (Joint) on 15 August 1942.[203] The US Scouts and Raiders (S&R) trained at this school represented the first American maritime special force established during the war. The unit's operational forte was shoreline reconnaissance, beach survey and assault pilotage. The 'Raider' element of their training (and nomenclature) largely being only for self-preservation.[204]

The first operational deployments of S&R personnel was, like 'Koodoo-Inhuman', at 'Torch' where S&R teams had the objectives of cutting harbour booms and anti-submarine nets before providing pilotage.[205] Later, S&R personnel would, both independently, and in close cooperation with the COPPs, undertake similar activities throughout the Mediterranean and Adriatic, as well as performing soundings prior to 'Overlord'.[206] Common to many special forces, the S&Rs also had a significant training and instructional mandate; their school at Fort Pierce, Florida providing instruction to the 2nd and 5th Rangers, the FSSF, and the USMC Reconnaissance Companies.[207] In July 1943 S&R instructors, alongside Australian personnel, were also responsible for the creation of the relatively short-lived 'Special Service Unit 1' in the Southwest Pacific to perform amphibious scouting. This unit would later provide a nucleus of instructors for the Alamo Scouts.[208] The range of tasks which S&R-trained personnel would ultimately undertake was exhaustive and would include employment

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[202] Dwyer, John B., *Scouts and Raiders*, (Praeger, 1993) pp.3-4
[203] This school would subsequently relocate to the Fort Pierce, Florida ATB. *Ibid.* pp.5-6
[204] Commander J.C. Hammock, USNATB Fort Pierce, Florida on 'Training Activities', RG 24, Historical Records of Navy Training Activities, 1940-1945, Box 28; Folder ATB Fort Pierce, Florida
[205] Marquis, Susan L., *Unconventional Warfare*, (Brookings Institution: Washington, 1997) p.21
[206] Admiral B.H. Ramsay to CCO, 11 December 1943, RG 331, Entry 12, Box 14; Folder SHAEF/6RX/INT
[207] See Dwyer (1993), pp.28-31; 83-91; Cunningham, Chet, *The Frogmen of World War II*, (Pocket Star Books: New York, 2005) p.152; Zedric and Dilley, pp.128-129
[208] Cunningham, p.13

as 'UDTs, Scout Intelligence Officers, Beachmasters and Control Officers'. Towards the end of the war twenty S&Rs would be sent to join SACO in China under the name 'Amphibious Roger' to help train Chinese guerrillas.[209] Joining this group in this role were a number of European- and Burma-experienced OGs which were sent to China to raise and train twenty Chinese 'Commando' groups.[210]

To cater for operations in the Pacific the USMC also sought to develop its own independent special amphibious reconnaissance capabilities, and by October 1942 a comprehensive document on 'Reconnaissance Patrols Landing on Hostile Shores' had been drafted. This highlighted the need to develop mechanisms for tactical and hydrographic beach reconnaissance, assault pilotage, deception operations, and small-scale direct action missions.[211] This document served as a call to arms, and in January 1943 the USMC created the Amphibious Reconnaissance Company (later Battalion) under Captain James Logan Jones. The Reconnaissance Company working in the Central Pacific shared a number of the roles of the Underwater Demolition Teams (UDT), albeit often maintaining a more clandestine focus, and, in addition, was capable of undertaking both overland reconnaissance and modest offensive action tasks (well illustrated by their deployment against Apamama atoll in November 1943).[212] With the development of the Central Pacific drive this unit was gradually expanded, first with the creation of a second company, and later gaining battalion strength. The unit's growth and employment in the numerous amphibious landings in the Central Pacific, in direct contrast to the comparative decline of the USMC Raiders, shows that despite their apparent reticence towards elite units, the USMC were still willing to utilise them when necessity determined it.[213]

Another pressing problem confronting the Allies that specialist seaborne units arose to help alleviate was that of overcoming underwater, beach and shore-side obstacles (both natural and man-made) and defences that might impede amphibious landings. On 6 May 1943 Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander in Chief US Navy, issued a directive

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[209] Dwyer (1993), pp.34; 135; 143
[210] For information on OG activities in China, see: RG 226, Entry 154, Boxes 162-166
[211] Colonel G.B. Erskine, Corps intelligence order 4-42 'Reconnaissance Patrols Landing on Hostile Shores', 29 October 1942, RG 127, History and Museums Division, Subject File Relating to World War II, Box 46; Folder 7
[212] Correspondence between VAC and Reconnaissance Company, RG 127, USMC Geographic Files, Gilberts, Box 27; Folder A6-9
[213] Meyers, Bruce F., *Fortune Favors the Brave*, (Naval Institute Press: Annapolis, 2000) p.8

proposing the training of men for permanent 'Naval Demolition Units'.[214] King was sparked into this by an 'urgent requirement' for approach channels to be opened up for the landings on Sicily.[215] To this end, a scratch unit of US Navy 'SeeBees' comprising three officers and fifteen men, was formed as 'Demolitions Unit No.1' at the Solomons Island ATB, given basic instruction, and deployed to Sicily. Although the unit was not required as expected at 'Husky', the potential value of such units had been highlighted so that when the men returned to the US they became the nucleus for the newly-authorised Naval Combat Demolition Units (NCDUs), each comprised one officer and five men.[216]

The direct British 'equivalent' to the NCDUs were the Landing Craft Obstacle Clearance Units (LCOCUs), initially referred to as the 'RN Boom Commando' or 'Boom Clearance Parties', which, like their NCDU counterparts, developed just before the Sicily invasion.[217] Both units were utilised, with varying levels of responsibility, in all major European amphibious landings from Sicily onwards. Their work was gradually supplemented, occasionally by direct attachment, by personnel of the US Army Corps of Engineers, Royal Engineers and the Royal Marine Engineer Commandos who would be responsible for demolitions above the high-watermark in the assault.[218] It was not until shortly before D-Day, however, that inter-service co-operation on these tasks was firmly established and 'gap assault' teams were created from a combination of both Naval and Army personnel.[219]

Although the S&R concept had expanded to the Southwest Pacific with the creation of the 7th Amphibious Force Special Unit 1 in March 1943 under Commander William B.

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[214] Inter-service tensions and confusion over the responsibility for shoreline and high-water mark demolitions had caused the US Army's Corps of Engineers to parallel a number of the NCDU developments. As early as 1923 the US Army had been responsible for constructing beach and underwater defences, and had begun experiments in their destruction two months before the instigation of the US Navy's programme. Unlike the Navy, however, the Army assigned this role to existent combat engineer units and did not form any dedicated specialist units for the task. O'Dell, James Douglas, 'Joint-Service Beach Obstacle Demolition in World War II', *Engineer*, (April-June 2005), p.36

[215] Admiral E.J. King to US Fleet Commands, 6 May 1943, RG 80, Formerly Security-Classified General Correspondence of the CNO/Secretary of the Navy, 1940-1947, Box 1009; Folder S76-3 – S76-5

[216] CNO to BuPers, 25 November 1943, RG 80, Formerly Security-Classified General Correspondence of the CNO/Secretary of the Navy, 1940-1947, Box 1009; Folder S76-3 – S76-5; Fane, Francis Douglas and Moore, Don, *The Naked Warriors*, (Allan Wingate: London, 1957) p.22

[217] Rear-Admiral C.S. Daniel, 'Establishment of a Boom Commando', 25 June 1943, DEFE 2/963

[218] Zedric and Dilley, p.174; Supplemental Plan to V Corps Neptune Plan, 26 March 1944, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 24369; Folder 601

[219] O'Dell (2005), p.36

Coultas, and the USMC had created their Reconnaissance Company, on the whole, however, the development of specialist reconnaissance and demolitions units in the Pacific was, in light of potential requirement, surprisingly slow in coming.[220] The real catalyst for change, the identification of need, stemmed from assaults on Tarawa and Makin in November 1943. The difficultly experienced in crossing the coral reef illuminating 'the crying need for scout-swimmers'.[221] Although immediately prior to Tarawa, Admiral Nimitz 'had directed his own gunnery officer Captain Tom B. Hill to assemble a beach reconnaissance and demolition unit', time was too short for it to be properly used in the operation.[222] Following Tarawa and Makin, Rear-Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, Commander Fifth Amphibious Force, conducted an analysis of lessons learnt and identified the cardinal requirement for a naval demolition and reconnaissance unit. Subsequently, on 26 December 1943 Turner called for the formation of nine Underwater Demolition Teams (UDTs) and the creation of an Experimental and Tactical Underwater Demolition Station on Hawaii.[223] Following some initial guidance from the NCDU teams at Fort Pierce, the first UDTs were established. Comprised 100 men of all ranks, their creation absorbed a large quantity of NCDUs and by May 1944 the NCDU programme at Fort Pierce was converted into the larger UDT organisation.[224]

Formed from a combination of personnel that included men of the NCDU, S&Rs and OSS MU, the UDTs had a somewhat broad range of capabilities. Their role was not limited to demolitions, therefore, but also included reconnaissance and pilotage activities. The first UDT deployments were in operation 'Flintlock' against Roi Namur and Kwajalein. Despite these operations being somewhat *ad hoc* because the 'Teams lacked permanence, cohesion, discipline and military experience', they did, however, prove the 'value of night reconnaissance in rubber boats' and of obstacle demolitions and led to the development of seven more UDTs.[225] Unlike the prevailing night-time

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[220] Zedric and Dilley, p163
[221] Alexander, Joseph H., *Storm Landings*, (Naval Institute Press: Annapolis, 1997) p.29
[222] Fane and Moore, p.15
[223] Rear-Admiral Turner to CNO, 26 December 1943, RG 80, Formerly Security-Classified General Correspondence of the CNO, 1940-1947, Box 1764; Folder S76-3/A-ZZ; VAC Study of conditions at Tarawa, January 1944, RG 127, Records of US Marine Corps, USMC Geographic Files, Gilberts, Box 36
[224] W.B. Phillips, Administrative Commander, VAC to Chief of Naval Personnel, 28 March 1944; CNO to BuPers, 2 May 1944, RG 80, Formerly Security-Classified General Correspondence of the CNO, 1940-1947, Box 1452; Folder S76-3
[225] Admiral R.K. Turner, Commander Fifth Amphibious Force to Admiral Nimitz, 14 March 1944, in *Ibid.*

and clandestine approach to reconnaissance and pilotage tasks that dominated all amphibious operations before 'Overlord' in the European theatre, the methods of the UDTs in the Central Pacific, in correlation with the prevailing amphibious doctrine that sacrificed surprise for firepower, were more overt in focus, often conducted in daylight under the cover of supporting fires. The exception to this general rule was UDT 10 which, formed from a nucleus of OSS swimmers who had trained with the SRU, also undertook a number of clandestine reconnaissance tasks from submarines, as seen before the landings on Palau, Yap and Truk.[226]

The increasing importance of amphibious operations during the war not only called for beach reconnaissance, combat demolitions and pilotage roles, but also for deception and diversion operations. In April 1942 COHQ created the 'Camouflage Training and Development Centre B', later known as the 'Combined Operations Scout Unit' (COSU), to conduct sonic, aural, visual, and wireless deceptions before amphibious landings.[227] Inspired by this unit, in March 1943, the US Navy had formed the 'Beach Jumpers' with a similar mandate.[228] Both British and American units would work as part of the 'A Force' deception plans for the large-scale amphibious landings on Sicily and Italy as well as in smaller operations in the Adriatic.

Although this chapter has only covered the inception and employment of Anglo-American special forces in broad brush strokes, it is quite evident that in comparison to the commando and ranger variety of unit, the processes of inception and use of the various special forces during the Second World War were considerably more complex. The speed and extent to which British specialist formations proliferated during the first years of the war is illustrative of their cultural enthusiasm for such means. They would develop from various sources, both high-level policy decisions and from the grass-roots ideas of junior officers. The latter *ad hoc* and informal process of innovation and acceptance, the relationship between the 'errant captain' and 'champion', was uniquely British. There were no American counterparts to the likes of Bagnold, Stirling, Courtney or Hasler etc. as innovators and practitioners. Instead, for the US, it was so often the higher-commander which played the essential 'founding father' role inception, as with Donovan's role with COI/OSS groups; General Marshall laying the

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[226] Various documents: RG 226, Entry 139, Box 73; Folder 73

[227] 'Directive for the Camouflage Training and Development Centre 'B'', 19 May 1942, DEFE 2/740

[228] See: Dwyer, John B., *Seaborne Deception*, (Praeger: London, 1992)

foundations for both the Rangers and the FSSF; or General Walter Krueger's raising the Alamo Scouts and 6th Rangers.

As nascent creations the roles of the earliest special forces, such as the LRDG and 1st SBS, were uniquely broad. These units initially offered unknown potentials and their *ad hoc* and highly individualistic patterns of inception had ensured that their exact function and projected manner of employment was left largely undefined. In their formative periods, therefore, there was a certain proclivity to view these units, often derisively, as 'private armies', as temporary, small-scale expedients that did not require an explicit expression of purpose. It was the rise and use of these formations in the Desert War that was of the greatest significance in defining the genre of special forces; successes in both offensive and intelligence tasks led both to the expansion and legitimisation of these units. By the end of 1942 these formations had escaped the stigma of the 'private army' and were increasingly viewed as useful, if not essential, adjuncts to conventional operations.

That the growth and legitimisation of offensively-orientated special forces shadowed the transition of the commando role was no coincidence. Special forces such as the SAS and SSRF were created because of growing frustrations with the ability of commando formations to undertake raiding operations at the required frequency, scale and depth. That special forces were proving themselves to be a more cost-effective, versatile, and simpler alternative to the committal of commando formations certainly hastened the general evolution of the commando role. For many special forces, however, small-scale autonomous raiding, the brief *raison d'être* of the commando formation, would represent only one occupation within their much broader range of other responsibilities.

In many regards the proliferation and use of special forces was in direct contrast to that of the commando and ranger formations. Whilst from the summer of 1944 onwards the commando, and particularly ranger, formations faced gradual decline in deployment and even disbandment, the special forces, conversely, continued to grow in both establishment (with units such as Royal Marine Detachment 385 or SAARF being created at a relatively late stage) and use, as the concerted employment of various special forces in virtually all theatres throughout 1944-45 attests. The divergence in employment is most pronounced with the US example. Whilst in 1945 the personnel

employed in their ranger-style formations had declined to approximately 1,350 men, the number of men in their special forces was at an all-time high of approximately 4,770 men, a figure that even exceeded the comparative number of 3,870 men within the British special forces at this time. It is quite clear therefore that, unlike with the rangers and commandos, both Britain and the US (contrary to much historical opinion) almost equally embraced both the development and use of special forces units.

The role and employment of special forces evolved alongside transitions in the overall strategic picture. Alongside heralding the formal transition of commandos and rangers towards spearheading and flank guard duties, the amphibious invasions of North Africa and Sicily also witnessed the creation and employment of dedicated special forces to cater for hydrographical and topographical reconnaissance, underwater and shore-side demolitions, assault pilotage, and deception operations. Similarly, whilst the stresses and strains of protracted overland campaigns had propelled commando formations into more conventional deployments, they offered special forces the potential to conduct operations in depth to support main force activities in a more indirect manner. Most significantly, perhaps, was the gradual inclusion of special forces within the resistance war and the coordination of their activities with emergent partisan movements. The summer of 1944 saw a distinct acceleration in the employment of special forces in such a capacity as Allied subversive agencies aimed to coincide the upsurge of many European partisan movements with the invasion of France in order to recoup the greatest disruptive benefit to the German war effort. Before this date, and despite some concerted lobbying from the likes of the SAS and OGs in Italy, special forces were rarely able, or permitted, to deploy in depth to the scale which they desired.

In the later stages of the war operations alongside partisan formations became both more common and an increasingly important function for many special forces, even for those units without an original mandate for such roles. Operating in depth, special forces were increasingly called upon to act as political liaison groups and civil affairs officers. As Mackenzie stated, 'the guerrilla leader, and the officer attached to him, had to be as much politician as soldier, and it was rarely possible to undertake serious operations without considering political consequences'.[229] The dispatch of Major Jellicoe of the SBS into Rhodes to negotiate with the Italian garrison soon after Italy's surrender is a prime example of such a role, as is the dispatch, with similar

[229] Mackenzie, p.41

motivations, of Lieutenant-Colonel Serge Obolensky of the OSS OGs to both Sardinia and Corsica. Specialist forces such as the LRDG, SBS and OGs also undertook civil affairs or 'hearts and minds' operations, helping to gain the complicity and support of local populations by the provision of supplies and medical care etc.. Prime example of such a role was 'Antagonist' an OG operation in France in which an OSS medical officer was dispatched to support the 'Percy Red' group and organise medical services to the Maquis and local population.[230]

Links with partisans was a natural concomitant to operating in depth, a nucleus of pre-existing indigenous support being an important pre-requisite for the committal of uniformed special forces. The use of special forces in enemy controlled territory with no nucleus of support imposed severe limitations on the activities that they could expect to undertake. Conversely, with resistance formations in existence (or in sparsely populated areas such as in the desert), the potential for special forces became widely extended. Deployment of special forces alongside partisans was often a mutually beneficial arrangement. Indigenous forces provided special forces with both guides and intelligence, and if properly equipped and trained, additional manpower for security cordons and reception committees etc. thus freeing up the special forces personnel for other activities. Special forces, for their part, could provide partisans with guidance, training, direction, leadership, equipment and 'stiffening'.[231] Such roles were common for both the SAS and the OGs in France, and was the *raison d'être* of the RSR.

In a number of areas Britain and the US would raise special forces for similar purposes, such as those catering for beach reconnaissance, pilotage, underwater demolitions, and deception tasks; and, as with the Jedburghs and SAARF, even formed units of a multinational composition. Despite this, and unlike the commando and ranger formations in which there was a definite inter-Allied commonality, there were some notable differences between the variety of special forces that Britain and the US raised, and in the manner in which they would operate. There was, for example, no American effort to cater for autonomous mobile harassment operations widely undertaken by the likes of the SAS or PPA; no comparable effort to emulate to the same extent the broad gamut of British maritime special forces; no units utilising

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[230] EMFFI Operational Brief No.3, operation 'Antagonist', 8 August 1944, RG 226, Entry 148, Box 83; Folder 1205

[231] Foot, M.R.D., *Resistance – An Analysis of European Resistance to Nazism*, (Eyre Methuen: London, 1976) p.53

enemy uniform such as the SIG; and little effort to decapitate enemy leadership via assassination or kidnap. That the US did not undertake such roles, or form specialised units for their conduct, was partly due to their cultural perception as to what were acceptable roles for these formations, but was also greatly affected by the state of the strategic situation when they were conceiving their units.

Conversely, amongst the British there was no concerted effort to emulate either the strategic reserve role of the OGs or their bilingual talents for dealing with indigenous forces; nor was there the same proclivity to create special forces from institutions such as the S&R School or the Alamo Scouts Training Center, which could train units and disseminate their specialist techniques; nor did the British, largely because of the drastically different amphibious warfare doctrine that developed in Europe, make any effort to emulate the size, scale or the methods of UDT operations. Despite these doctrinal and organisational differences, one cannot escape the prevailing impression of just how close the Anglo-American alliance was in the field of specialist forces and irregular warfare. The next requirement of this thesis is to examine in greater depth the significance of this 'special relationship' on the rise, development and use of both British and American commando and special forces.

Chapter 3
Allied co-operation and interdependency

It is a widely established truism that by 1944 the US military had matched, and was beginning to exceed, the British contribution to fighting the Second World War. Britain was gradually becoming the lesser partner in the global alliance. Study of the fields of irregular warfare and of specialist formations, however, presents quite a different picture. During the course of the Second World War Britain not only helped the US identify a need for specialist formations, but also willingly provided them with the model on which to base their first nascent creations; Britain provided the US with establishments, equipment, instructors and means through which experience could be gained in this field. Moreover, British hegemony in irregular operations survived the more general decline of importance of Britain's strategic contribution. Utilising specific examples, this chapter will assess the value and importance of the British model and experience, and their willingness to share this, on the US creation and use of ranger and special forces during the Second World War. It will examine the notion of the 'special relationship' in irregular warfare and examine the manner in which the two allies co-operated with one another in the field. By addressing the issues of Allied interdependence and the effects of cross fertilisation of ideas, personnel, doctrine, and equipment, a close, and almost symbiotic, relationship between the two nations in the field of specialist formations will become clear.

The scale and importance of the Anglo-American military alliance during the Second World War is an exhaustively covered subject, and discussion of the broadest issues of alliance strategy and diplomacy has little place here. It is suffice, however, to acknowledge that this alliance was, diplomatically and militarily speaking, one of the closest and 'most successful in modern history'.[1] In such a climate, at least a degree of co-operation and mutual dependency between the specialist formations of Britain and the US was inevitable. It is equally unsurprising that Britain would dominate the alliance when it was first cemented. Britain's two years of practical experience in raising, training, organising, equipping, and most importantly, deploying, specialist formations contrasted favourably against the practically non-existent US record on the issue before their entry into the war. The significance of this early British lead in the alliance is obvious and should not be underestimated. Militarily speaking, the US

[1] Eisenhower, John S.D., *Allies: Pearl Harbor to D-Day*, (Da Capo Press, 2000) p.xxi in preface

entered the war deficient in most areas, and compared to a mobilised and experienced Britain, America began the war as the junior partner in their relationship.

Co-operation between Britain and the US in the field of irregular warfare and specialist formations did, however, precede American entry in the war. As David Reynolds has emphasised: 'In 1940-41 the co-operative element [between the two nations] was paramount. Both countries faced common military and ideological threats at a time when their strengths and weaknesses were unusually complementary'.[2] Amongst other things, these threats caused the US to seek British advice on irregular and subversive warfare, clandestine intelligence and raiding operations prior to Pearl Harbor. Knowledge of such areas would allow them to prepare for, and to theoretically embark on, actions against Germany whilst retaining an isolationist stance.

The earliest moves made by the US to learn about British approaches to, and experiences of, irregular warfare came from Donovan's COI organisation. In both July, and December, 1940 Donovan toured British military commands with the intention of learning 'as much as he could about British secret intelligence, special operations, psychological warfare and guerrilla units'.[3] The lessons that Donovan learned during these visits were soon put to into practical effect when he was appointed COI in July 1941. From the outset Donovan saw close liaison with his British counterpart organisations to be an essential requirement to the success of his command, he accordingly sought to develop with them a symbiotic bond.[4] The British organisations including SOE, COHQ and, to a lesser extent, SIS were accommodating and each were quite willing to forge a relationship with Donovan and tell him all that he wanted. From the outset COI gained 'complete entrée into the operations and techniques [that the British] ... had developed during the preceding years'. British willingness to share this knowledge was no act of charity, however, and the cost of COI's education would be the US yielding a degree of control over their activities to the British. Despite this, the US had 'little to lose and years to gain' by such propositions, and were initially willing to 'surrender independence for rapid learning'.[5]

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[2] Reynolds, David, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance*, (Europa: London, 1981) p.294
[3] Stafford (1999), p.56
[4] Roosevelt Vol.I, p.12
[5] Roosevelt, Kermit, *War Report of the OSS, Volume II: The Overseas Targets* (Walker: New York, 1976) pp.viii in introduction; 3

From September 1941 SOE began offering concerted specialist training to COI personnel. It was decided that this would be best achieved by establishing a dedicated special training school in Canada (known as School 103 or 'Camp X') at which a nucleus of British experts could provide training to American recruits and lay the 'foundations for an American capability in secret warfare'. Although not opened until 9 December 1941, at which stage it would have been politically acceptable for camps to have been formed within mainland USA, 'Camp X' was, in the opinion of David Stafford, a 'godsend' to Donovan's fledgling organisation.[6] With the impediments of neutrality removed, in early-1942 COI would establish more camps in both Virginia and Maryland to which SOE would continue to furnish the 'key instructors'. Even when OSS established its first independent training schools in July 1942 there was a continued reliance upon a British curriculum and on the rotation of these British instructors.[7] The impact of the British on the fledgling COI, and later OSS, should not be underestimated. As Harris-Smith contended: 'The British felt that OSS, in its formative stages, "could not have survived" without their aid. Donovan knew this as well'.[8] Were it not for the British example and willingness to share this with the US it is certainly conceivable that OSS, or at least its special operations capabilities, would not have existed at all.

In addition to clandestine intelligence, subversion, and sabotage, the US also took a pre-war interest in British raiding operations and the Commandos. And, as has already been noted, the British influence on the establishment of all US ranger-style formations during the war was quite evident. The seeds of this process were sown early. In the summer of 1941 a USMC contingent headed by General Julian Smith had toured Britain and, in so doing, had observed the Commandos and been provided with detailed information on their establishments.[9] It was subsequently arranged that forty USMC officers and NCOs be attached to No.3 Commando (recently returned from the Lofotens raid) for two months' training. The Commandos, for their part, were said to have 'greatly welcomed' such an opportunity to share their experiences with the US Marines and glean what they could of American equipment and doctrines.[10] As has previously been noted, at least a proportion of the motivation and ideas for the USMC

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[6] Stafford, David, *Camp X: SOE and the American Connection*, (Viking: London, 1988) pp.12; 61
[7] Yu, Maochun, *OSS in China*, (Yale University Press, 1996) p.19; Stafford (2000), p.153
[8] Harris-Smith, pp.32-33
[9] Lieutenant-Colonel T. Ely, Office of DCO to Major Daniell, War Office, 31 July 1941, WO 193/405
[10] Mountbatten to COS Committee, 23 January 1942, CAB 121/177

Raiders would stem from this successful arrangement, which was again repeated in April 1942.[11] Despite the fact that those USMC personnel who had trained with the Commandos were certainly of value in getting the Raiders off the ground, there would, after the April 1942 arrangement, however, be no further direct contact between the USMC and Commandos.

Once the US entered the war exchanges of personnel and equipment between British and American subversive agencies and specialist formations became much more common. These arrangements were an obvious ancillary to the wider trends of Allied co-operation developing with the establishment of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, and grew stronger and more efficient as the war progressed. One of the more significant arrangements in this field was the creation of the CCO Representative (CCOR) staff in Washington D.C. in March 1942 that would be loosely paralleled by the American staff in London established in April under Colonel Lucian Truscott. This arrangement served to keep both nations abreast of developments in amphibious techniques and equipment, and provide advice on 'all matters of combined operations' including the development of commandos and special forces. Despite the absence of a direct American equivalent to COHQ forcing CCOR to cover much ground 'by personnel contacts', the arrangement worked well, with the standing practice of monthly exchange visits and tours of experimental and training areas. CCOR found the 'Americans ... only too keen to help ... by keeping us informed of their developments'.[12]

The US Army first came into contact with the Commandos during tours of COHQ in January 1942 but it would not be until Truscott's COHQ staff was formed, that the US Army began to show any real interest in the Commandos. The creation of the 1st Ranger Battalion, in both theoretical and practical terms, closely mirrored the Commandos: the Ranger TOE closely followed the Commando War Establishment; their training occurring at British hands at the Commando school at Achnacarry and in exercises with formed Commandos in Scotland; and, for the purposes of tactical control, they were placed under the SS Brigade.[13] Despite such influence, the US Army remained keen for the Rangers to keep as much of their American identity as possible,

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[11] Durnford-Slater, p.56; No.3 Commando War Diary, 1941, WO 218/23; Vice-Admiral R.L. Ghormley, US Special Naval Observer London to CCO, 21 January 1942, CAB 121/177
[12] Historical summary of CCOR, Washington D.C., DEFE 2/780
[13] Major-General Chaney, Adjutant General to GOC, USANIF, 1 June 1942, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21066, Folder INBN-1-0

they hoped 'that all applicable American doctrines and methods will be retained, but the special doctrines and methods developed by the British will be adopted whenever necessary'.[14] There was an implicit expectation, which was often repeated, that the British model could be improved upon.[15]

In addition to providing the inspiration for the Rangers and Raiders, the British Commandos also provided some of the initial impetus behind the concept of the OSS OGs. Having come into contact with the early Commandos during his visits to Britain in 1940 Donovan had come away enthused and inspired viewing the Commandos as a unique model of aggressiveness and irregularity.[16] As soon as he was appointed COI in July 1941 Donovan thus made a special request that Dudley Clarke (serving at that time in Cairo) prepare for him 'notes on Commandos'.[17] In dealing with this request the British seem to have held an incorrect impression that the US had already made some progress in this field, believing it 'unwise' to provide them with a 'paper entitled "A Suggested Procedure for starting Commandos in the USA Army", as they may feel that we are trying to teach our grandmother to suck eggs.'[18] A more modestly entitled paper was thus dutifully prepared by Clarke and DCO personnel and submitted to Donovan.

Remaining impressed with the Commando concept, in July 1942, following the establishment of OSS, Donovan dispatched a group under Colonel O'Daniels to observe and report upon the Commandos. This mission's findings were, however, less than complimentary:

> The [Commando] personnel are not up to the qualifications as laid out in the directive setting up the service. As planned the men should be able to handle every type of vehicle, every type of weapon. They should be able to handle boats, to swim, to know thoroughly demolition and communication. Actually the men are small, scrawny individuals but extremely powerful and in better shape than anything we have attained with our own troops. They are stupid, act like sheep, and have the mentality of a Carolina nigger.[19]

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[14] *Ibid.*
[15] Black (1992), p.17
[16] Hogan, *US Army*, p.8
[17] Dudley Clarke, GHQ Cairo to Major A.W.E. Daniell, War Office, 10 July 1941, WO 193/405
[18] Major Daniell, War Office to Lieutenant-Colonel T. Ely, Office of DCO, 23 July 1941, WO 193/405
[19] Stacey Lloyd to Major Bruce on 'Commando Training and Operations', 5 August 1942, RG 226, Entry 92, Box 111, Folder 49

It was an analysis obviously marred by a false and unrealistic perception of what the Commandos were and what they could achieve (that itself resulted from the original, optimistic training mandate setting up the Commandos[20]), and coloured by a number of less than glowing appraisals of the early Commando raids. The report cited, for example, the damning fact that some Commandos could not swim and were left behind in the 'Guernsey fiasco'; it mentions inexperience at Vaagso; and is critical of the losses at St. Nazaire, but shows little sense of what was achieved by any of the raids. This OSS report concluded that: 'If Americans are to develop these units, these should be trained as the British say their Commandos are trained, but actually are not'.[21] Such reports were of importance in shaping the approach that OSS would ultimately adopt towards direct action units and thus despite Donovan's earlier interest, when the OGs were ultimately formed, they were fundamentally different to the Commandos in both composition and role. Despite this ultimate divergence, a number of OGs would still benefit from the Commando training establishments in Scotland, as well as parachute facilities at Ringway, and various SOE training schools for specialised instruction.

In both practical and theoretical terms the OSS MU owed more to the British example than any other element of COI/OSS. In February 1942 Commander H.G.A. Woolley, RN was attached to COI to provide advice on maritime methods of agent infiltration and transport. In April Woolley established the 'Area D' training facility to instruct COI on British special maritime methods and, in so doing, really illuminated COI as to the 'wide possibilities which lay ahead' in offensive maritime activities.[22] Such was his influence in this capacity, that when the MU was formerly established in January 1943 Woolley was appointed as the branch commander.[23] That Woolley was granted the unique privilege of heading a foreign unit (a post which he held until October 1943 when he would become liaison officer between Donovan and Laycock) is illustrative of just how symbiotic the relationship between Britain and America in the development of these units could be.

As soon as OSS began considering the conduct of clandestine subversion, sabotage, intelligence and special operations it was essential for them to maintain the closest possible relationship with Britain so as to avoid the risk of compromise, competition

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[20] See for copy: DEFE 2/849
[21] Lloyd to Bruce, *op. cit.*
[22] History of the OSS MU, RG 226, Entry 99, Box 98; Folder 4
[23] Dennis J. Roberts, Acting Chief, MU to Ensign Putzel, 28 October 1943, RG 226, Entry 92, Box 490; Folder 26

and redundancy. SOE or OSS independence would be impracticable and could lead to confusion and chaos.[24] As soon as OSS was created in June 1942 an alliance with SOE was cemented and plans for world-wide collaboration established. Donovan and Sir Charles Hambro immediately proposed dividing up the world and establishing global spheres of co-operation and responsibility for the two organisations. Ratified in September 1942, the SO/SOE Agreement 'set forth the basic elements of cooperation in every theatre of war, [it] was based upon the general principle that Americans would control areas specifically designated as spheres of American influence, while SOE would control special operations in areas dominated by the British'.[25] India, East and West Africa, the Balkans, the Middle East, and Western Europe were to be the province of SOE, whilst OSS was to have authority over special operations in China, Manchuria, Korea, Australia, the Atlantic Islands, Finland and North Africa. Other areas were placed under joint control.[26] This agreement was not, however, definitive and in areas in which one nation held 'responsibility' the other could still provide liaison and assistance. The 'US could assign its own Mission, with headquarters, stations and agents to British territory, to operate under direction and control of the British "controller"; and vice versa. Differences of opinion would be referred to Washington and London, respectively.'[27]

In December 1942 Donovan sent his Special Operations (SO) Branch chief, Ellery C. Huntington, Jr., on a three-month tour of Europe, Africa and the Middle East to prepare infrastructure for the conduct of SO activities (under whose broader control both the OGs and MU were originally placed). Huntington initially believed that SO should not be "'an adjunct' of SOE and must remain independent of the British".[28] At this early stage, however, the junior status of OSS rendered such desires almost totally impracticable, and thus when the SO London branch was established not only was it organised in a manner 'exactly similar' to the operational division of SOE but was also placed under their British counterpart's charge. Redressing his early expectations, Huntington subsequently hoped that by June 1944 OSS would be 'reasonably experienced' to become fully independent.[29] By the later stages of 1943, however, it

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[24] OSS/London War Diaries, Vol.1 Chief of Staff, KCLMA MF 204
[25] Roosevelt Vol.I, pp.206-207
[26] 'Summary of Agreement between British SOE and American SO', September 1942, HS 1/165
[27] JCS 86/1 'Agreements between OSS and British SOE', 26 August 1942, RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45, Box 369; Folder CCS 385 (8-6-42)
[28] Stafford (2000), pp.224-225
[29] OSS/London War Diaries, Vol.1 Chief of Staff, KCLMA MF 204

was becoming gradually apparent that in such important theatres independence for either SOE or OSS would be quite inappropriate, and, in time, almost perfect synergy between the two organisations would be achieved. In January 1944 the relevant sections of SOE and OSS became integrated into the SOE/SO organisation (rechristened Special Forces Headquarters [SFHQ] in April 1944) and were placed under the control of SHAEF. SOE was willing to grant OSS a greater share of responsibilities at this stage because the American agency was increasingly proving their value to the British, specifically in their provision of funds; manpower; staff assistance; supplies for resistance groups; communication infrastructure; and, most significantly, providing aircraft for insertion and supply.[30]

Attempts at a similar merger between SOE and OSS in Algiers were initially problematic. The SOE branch in this theatre (AMF) was wary of the 'American temperament [which] demands quick and spectacular results' which they believed contrasted negatively to their own 'long-term and plodding' approach. They believed there were a number of 'dangers' to OSS independence:

1. 'The irresponsibility of OSS.
2. Their permanent hankering after playing cowboys and red Indians.
3. Their unlimited dollars.
4. The political necessity of paying spectacular dividends.
5. Their capacity for blundering into delicate European situations about which they understand nothing.'[31]

Though such ill feeling did not last long, these perceptions highlight that even as late as September 1943 SOE still considered itself as providing the brains and experience to any enterprise, viewing OSS as immature, inexperienced and merely a source of money and resources. OSS on the other hand, still very much the junior partner, were critical of being hamstrung by SOE: the first American officer dropped into France, for example, in June 1943 operated firmly under SOE auspices, and future deployments were delayed by SOE insistence that OSS agents be screened and trained at British installations before deployment.[32]

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[30] Illustrative of OSS gradually matching SOE's operational contribution is the fact that in March 1944 the British contribution to supply sorties into France was ten times as many as OSS, but by May, a larger OSS allocation of aircraft ensured that OSS were matching the British involvement. Harris-Smith, p.174; Roosevelt Vol.II, p.4; Hogan, *US Army*, p.48

[31] 'SOE/OSS Relations in North Africa', 'AMF' to 'CD' [Gubbins], 27 September 1943, HS 3/57

[32] Harris-Smith, p.174

Such a policy was not, however, a result of British arrogance. As late as 1944 even those formations which had been trained by American instructors in American training camps would still find that they benefited greatly from supplementary training received either from direct contact with British specialist formations or though attending British advanced training establishments. OSS Captain John Tyson reported to the Chief of the SO Branch in July 1943 that: 'The training any prospective SO agent has received in our Washington schools prior to his arrival in this [ETO] theatre is entirely inadequate and no trainees should be considered for field operations until they have had further training in this theatre, which in many cases will involve a period of three months.'[33] To have deployed personnel with OSS training alone was thought to be suicidal. Major Brucker, an OSS SO agent dispatched to France in early-1944 would admit that 'SOE training was far superior. It made most of my OSS/SO stateside training seem amateurish'.[34] Aaron Bank, wartime Jedburgh and the post-war 'father of US special forces' believed that despite his formative OG training in America (Bank was originally a member of the 'French' OGs before transferring to the Jedburghs) he had only received the 'real McCoy' upon arrival in the UK.[35] This view was supported by William Colby, a wartime Jedburgh and later head of the CIA, who freely cited American inexperience and claimed that it was from the British that '.... we learned all the dark arts'.[36]

As a whole, however, it was increasingly understood that between SOE and OSS co-operation was more beneficial than conflict and that independence for either agency was impracticable. The first quarter of 1944 thus saw SOE, OSS and other Allied subversive and specialist commands become increasingly well integrated. The multinational Jedburgh programme serves as fine illustration of the positive application of the close SOE/SO alliance that had developed in both Britain and North Africa. In the training of these groups, first in Scotland and later in Milton Hall near London (and for some teams, Algiers), the British were dominant and were fully prepared to share their experience and methods with the men of the other nations involved. Whilst the American contingent more than pulled their weight in regards to the supply of weaponry and equipment so as to ensure that 'no Jed was without his American parachute boots, satchel and carbine'. Throughout the programme 'all forms of

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[33] Quoted in Briscoe, Charles H., 'Major Herbert R. Brucker SF Pioneer', *Veritas*, Vol.3, No.1, 2007, pp.72-85
[34] Quoted in *Ibid.*
[35] Bank, Aaron, *From OSS to Green Berets*, (Presido, 1986) pp.6-9
[36] Colby, William, *Honourable Men*, (Hutchinson: London, 1978) p.36

segregation by nationality were very deliberately avoided if not actually banned.... the Jeds were quartered together, trained and messed together and, in all matters of food, equipment and privileges, were treated identically'.[37] This served to create a climate of 'remarkable corporate spirit' in which it was possible to form the individual teams by self-selection on the basis of personal relationships.[38] For the most part co-operation between the various nationalities taking part in the Jedburgh programme was remarkably harmonious, with any animosity being in the form of healthy rivalry analogous to that 'between different regiments in the same brigade, or different ships in the same squadron'.[39]

On the whole, SOE and OSS co-operation in Europe was particularly smooth, well organised, and controlled. In the Far East, on the other hand, and reflective of the generally strained relations between the Allies in theatre, the relationship between Allied irregular elements was 'never free of antagonism'.[40] Although the June 1942 SO/SOE Agreement established Burma as a theatre of joint SOE/OSS responsibility there were significant tensions in the application of this policy. Clinging to the possessions of Empire the protective British sought to retain a significant measure of control over independent American intelligence and subversive operations in the Far East. Unlike in Europe, however, where the British had over a year-and-a-half of experience in irregular and special operations before American entry, in the war against Japan the British 'lead' was considerably narrower and the general absence of subversive and special operations infrastructure at the time of Pearl Harbor ensured that Britain in the Far East had little justification to claim that they were more experienced than their emergent American counterparts.

This much more balanced situation ensured that when OSS Detachment 101 began to commence operations in northern Burma in September 1942 it did so as an explicitly separate entity to SOE; coming under General Stilwell's Northern Combat Area Command rather than the British GHQ-India. At this early stage of OSS operations such independence from the British was unique, and likely a source of much of the subsequent friction. Nevertheless, when it was first created OSS Detachment 101 had a

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[37] Brown, Arthur, *The Jedburghs: A Short History*, (Unpublished memoir, 1991) p.5 in IWM Brown 03/24/1
[38] Papers of Colonel Sir Thomas Macpherson, IWM Macpherson 05/73/1
[39] Foot, M.R.D., *SOE: An outline history of the Special Operations Executive 1940-46*, (BBC: London, 1984) p.151
[40] Yu, p.271

close relationship with the British. Its initial cadre had been trained at Camp 'X' in Canada and in recruiting personnel for its first operations it would rely heavily on British and Anglo-Burmese officers and men.[41] In a parallel arrangement, the British-controlled 'V' Force included a handful of American personnel, but these ceded to Detachment 101's control in early 1944.[42] Despite being independent of SOE, Detachment 101 would retain close liaison with them, sharing training establishments and jointly recruiting personnel. Even though there could be a degree of duplication of effort as well as a degree disharmony in their deployments resulting from personality conflicts, these early arrangements were generally acceptable to those in the field.[43] Historian Christopher Thorne, in fact, takes time to acknowledge that Detachment 101 (alongside the USAAF and RAF relationship) provides rare evidence of good relations in a theatre in which Anglo-Anglo-American relations were continually afflicted by significant tensions and animosities.[44]

The principal problems between irregular groups in the Far East arose at the higher echelons of command. In early-1943 SOE withdrew some of its teams from northern Burma leaving Detachment 101 as the dominant subversive and irregular organisation in the area. When Detachment 101 sought to solidify this position and expand the scope and scale of its operations, inter-Allied tensions increased. The British, GHQ-India in particular, resented the prospect of relinquishing all control of irregular activities in northern Burma to an independent American group; whilst the infamously Anglophobic General Stilwell 'felt that the risk of OSS coming under British political domination outweighed the advantages that would accrue from expanded operations.' By the summer of 1943 the relationship between OSS and the British in theatre was 'so bad that the status of Detachment 101 itself was being seriously impaired and its very existence was in danger'.[45] It would not be until the end of 1943 that these tensions began to dissipate. At the Quebec conference Donovan had taken the opportunity to broach OSS's difficulties with Mountbatten and would subsequently, in a visit to India in November 1943, get Mountbatten to tentatively assent to an expansion of OSS operations. Consequently, when 'P' Division was created in December 1943, which

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[41] 'Chronology of Detachment 101 to August 31, 1944', RG 226, Entry 92, Box 192; Folder 1, 13982-3, pp.1-2

[42] Also ceding to 101's control at this time was 'Dah Force', a British military mission which sought to raise Kachin guerrillas in support of the Second Chindit expedition. Peers, William R. and Brelis, Dean, *Behind the Burma Road*, (Robert Hale: London, 1964) pp.120; 147

[43] Roosevelt Vol.II, pp.369-392

[44] Thorne, Christopher, *Allies of a Kind*, (Oxford University Press, 1978) p.228

[45] Roosevelt Vol.II, p.393

served to coordinate all Allied subversive, irregular and special operations units under Mountbatten's SEAC, Detachment 101 was recognised as the sole Allied agency responsible for conducting irregular operations in northern Burma in support of CBI forces and was permitted to expand accordingly; something aided by Stilwell having 'used all his influence to have ... [SOE] removed from the Kachin Hills'.[46] To cater for OSS operations in other areas of Southeast Asia, which were firmly dominated by the British, it was deemed inappropriate to expand Detachment 101, but instead to create another diplomatically acceptable OSS group, Detachment 404, which operated in 'sufferance' directly under SEAC rather than CBI.[47]

As a general rule, however, the most strained relations that OSS would have with the British were not concerned with special operations, but were instead in the field of clandestine intelligence. There was a relatively pronounced body of opinion within OSS that suggested that '"in intelligence, the British are just as much the enemy as the Germans".'[48] As a statement made by an unnamed OSS officer in North Africa highlights:

> This British intelligence service [SIS] holds itself aloof from the SOE as from us, and it is a question whether the worst enemy of the SOE is the Germans or the SIS. .... SIS is an imperialistic organisation closely tied to the Foreign Office, and together they form the only British outfit which, in my opinion, we have any reason to mistrust.[49]

The same officer, however, paints a very different picture as regards to SOE:

> Probably one of the happiest unions in the history of international relations was that which existed, and still exists, between OSS and our British counterpart, the SOE. In my experience we worked in complete harmony and unison. Any difficulties which arose, and there were very few, were between individuals regardless of nationality and not between nationalities.[50]

As close as the Anglo-American alliance was, it was by no means innate and 'the indoctrination in "allied" thinking would take time to develop and vigilance to

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[46] Cruickshank, Charles, *SOE in the Far East*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1983) p.173; also various documents, WO 106/6092

[47] The War Report of the OSS suggests that: 'Had inter-Allied relationships been harmonious in the China-Burma-India Theatre, it is probable that Detachment 404 would never have been created. Instead, OSS operations in the territory of the Southeast Asia Command would almost certainly have been conducted from an expanded Detachment 101'. Roosevelt Vol.II, pp.393-405

[48] Harris-Smith, p.34

[49] Previously withdrawn OSS NATO documents, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 72; Folder 3

[50] *Ibid.*

maintain'.[51] In the earliest stages of the alliance, the British had a tendency to look down upon American soldiery as lacking in the training, discipline and diplomatic savvy which would enable them to undertake raiding and special operations independently and unsupervised.[52] In late-1942, for example, when General Eisenhower at AFHQ had expressed a desire for a raiding unit to be formed under his command he had hoped that it would include American personnel, but the British immediately considered such a move to 'be ill-advised' for a number of reasons: the Naval forces used for transport would be entirely British; the British had more experience and more trained personnel available; and inter-unit transfers of personnel with other British formations (the 1st SAS was cited) would be easier with a British unit. Furthermore, in light of the 'backward state of training of the American troops' it was recommended both that the unit should be, if not entirely British, at least have a British nucleus, and that independent American deployments should not occur until they had more trained and experienced personnel.[53] Illustrative of the sway of such British arguments was the fact that the unit that ultimately arose to fulfil Eisenhower's wishes was the 2nd SAS Regiment, comprised entirely of British personnel.

The most acute military animosities to trouble the wartime Anglo-American alliance would occur at the highest levels of command over matters of strategic direction; perhaps the most notable conflicts resulting from the incompatibility between American desires to prosecute an invasion of France at the earliest possible moment and the British proclivity towards an opportunist strategy involving the Mediterranean and other periphery theatres. As small-scale, generally low-cost and potentially autonomous bodies, specialist formations often transcended strategic debates about the committal of forces and offered a means of applying force on almost a global scale without traditional impediments. The employment of specialist formations would thus commonly circumvent national strategic policy, offering Britain a medium through which its more ambitious tangential 'Churchillian' strategies could be embraced without significant diplomatic backlash; and affording the US opportunity to undertake operations in theatres in which the committal of conventional formations was shunned. Fine illustration of which is the US policy towards Greece and the Balkans.

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[51] Eisenhower, p.121
[52] Reynolds, David, *Rich Relations: the American occupation of Britain, 1942-1945*, (Harper Collins: London, 1996) p.342
[53] CMP to CCO, 6 January 1943, DEFE 2/957

Following his 1941 tour of the Middle East Donovan had returned to America 'a strong endorsement of the Churchillian view of the Balkans as the "soft underbelly" of the Axis'.[54] Retaining such convictions, in August 1943, at a time when likes of Eisenhower, Marshall and Roosevelt were grudgingly assenting to the diversion of only a small number of USAAF aircraft to these theatres, Donovan would submit a proposal to the JCS asking for permission for OSS to begin operating against Greece and the Balkans. The JCS approved Donovan's plans but issued a strict proviso that such 'activities should be of such a character as will involve no commitment on the part of the United States. They should be directed solely to assisting in the defeat of the Axis Powers', and be in support of all indigenous elements 'without regard to their ideological differences, or political programs'.[55]

The latter part of this order, regarding the provision of apolitical support to guerrilla movements, is illustrative of an area of notable difference between British and US irregular policies. Whilst the British generally preferred to divert supplies away from any elements that might act against post-war interests, OSS generally followed the broader US policy of postponing political considerations until after the war.[56] The British were selective in their dealings with partisan elements, whereas the US, at least attempted to remain largely apolitical and were willing to deal with any group showing a willingness to fight against the enemy. The variation between these approaches was, on occasions, a source of tension between the Allies but, in light of the invariably close relations and integrated command arrangements between OSS and the British, such divergences seldom led to any greater complications than a degree of duplication of effort and confusion and would not subvert the overall effectiveness of Allied support to partisan movements.

Issues of grand strategy and politics aside, between the men at the 'sharp end' of Anglo-American special operations there was little reciprocal animosity. As General Omar Bradley, no stranger to high-level Allied antagonisms, stated: 'The suspicions and jealousies that split us centred largely in the headquarters commands. The nearer one went to the front the more comradely were our relations'.[57] This sentiment was

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[54] History of OSS Cairo, RG 226, Entry 99, Box 54; Folder 2
[55] Brigadier-General John R. Deane for JCS to Donovan, 7 September 1943, WO 201/2263
[56] Hogan, *US Army*, pp.48-49
[57] Bradley, Omar N., *A Soldier's Story*, (Henry Holt: New York, 1951) p.59

echoed in a letter Peter Wilkinson of SOE wrote to his wartime OSS colleague Franklin Lindsay regarding the

> "…. splendid … mutual trust and cooperation which existed between all of us 'in the field' …. There is abundant reference to the sickening intrigues, etc., Anglo/American, OSS/SOE rivalries and the rest of it in London and Washington and at Headquarters, that I think it is important for someone to say loud and clear that in the field it was completely otherwise and we were not only indifferent to who got the credit, but resolved above all never to let each other down".[58]

Animosities that did occur amongst British and American personnel were most prevalent during times of inactivity or training rather than during operational deployment, and stemmed primarily from divergences in military uniform, equipment, discipline, and pay between the troops.[59] Between personnel in the Anglo-American specialist formations, however, such divergences were generally overshadowed by a commonality stemming from a culture of volunteerism; a sense of belonging to an elite; and an *esprit de corps* forged from both strenuous and selective training and from undertaking unique and dangerous tasks in the field. As Serge Obolensky, training 'Norwegian' and 'French' OGs in England before D-Day remarked, the OGs were 'popular with the girls. Their pay was much higher than in the British army…. And yet there was a certain mutual respect as well, between them and the British'.[60]

The act of British and American specialist formations training together led to some strong bonds developing between the personnel of the two nations. It would, however, be the stresses and strains of participating in combined special operations that most readily led to Anglo-American personnel developing bonds that could transcend national identities. The first operational deployment involving both British and American specialist personnel were the fifty men from the 1st Ranger Battalion who 'forged a bond in blood with the Commandos' during the Dieppe raid.[61] In line with the policy that the Rangers should closely mirror the Commandos, the majority of the Rangers deployed at Dieppe, four officers and thirty-six men, would be attached to Lieutenant-Colonel Durnford-Slater's No.3 Commando; in addition four Rangers were attached to No.4 Commando and six to various elements of the 2nd Canadian Division. Before the operation those Rangers attached to the Commandos had a brief opportunity

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[58] Quoted in Lindsay, Franklin, *Beacons in the Night*, (Stanford University Press: 1993) p.205
[59] Reynolds (1996), p.327
[60] Obolensky, p.301
[61] Black (1992), p.46

to train with them so that during the operation they could be fully integrated into Commando troops. They were 'treated as equals ..., given meaningful assignments, and in some cases were incorporated into the British Commando system of "Jack and John" ['buddy system'] with one Ranger working with one Commando'.[62] In the opinion of Captain Roy Murray, the senior Ranger officer on the raid, the Rangers 'actually became part of 3 Commando', and Murray made a point reporting to Darby the 'most friendly spirit [that] prevails between the 3 Commando and the Rangers.'[63]

The Dieppe raid transpired to be the only operation in which, as was originally envisioned, 'the Rangers fought as students of the British'.[64] The invasion of North Africa provided the Rangers with ample opportunity to gain combat experience without being attached to the British raiding programme. Despite undertaking similar roles during operation 'Torch' there was scant co-operation or even liaison between the Rangers and Commandos in North Africa. The invasion did, however, bear witness to a unique Anglo-American integration within the ranks of Nos.1 and 6 Commandos. Prior to the invasion, in August 1942, the 168th Regimental Combat Team (RCT) of the US 34th Infantry Division was sent to Scotland to undertake amphibious and mountain warfare training, and to participate in exercises and rehearsals in conjunction with the Commandos.[65] Following the success of these exercises it was decided that elements of the 168th RCT should be incorporated into both Commandos to form composite units for the 'Torch' landings. This decision was taken for two main reasons: firstly, to improve inter-Allied co-operation in the Eastern Task Force landings; and secondly, to help maintain the illusion, taken for political reasons, that the invasion was a wholly American affair.[66]

The 'Torch' landings saw ten troops of No.1 and four of No.6 Commando variously integrated with British and American personnel.[67] This Anglo-American composition was retained after the initial landings, and British and American sections again fought

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[62] *Ibid.*, p.33
[63] Captain Roy A. Murray to CO 1st Ranger Battalion, 26 August 1942, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21066, Folder INBN-1-0
[64] King, pp.9-10
[65] For instance see: Exercise 'Pep', September 1942, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 9575; Folder 334-INF(168)-0.3 October-December 1942
[66] Eastern Assault Force Administrative Order No.2, 4 October 1942, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 9575; Folder 334-INF(168)-0.3 October-December 1942; Berens, Robert J., 'First Encounters', *Army*, Vol.42, No.7 July 1992, pp.45-48
[67] No.1 Commando War Diary, 9 December 1942, DEFE 2/37; No.6 Commando War Diary, DEFE 2/43

together under the same banner in both No.1 Commando's 'amphibious left hook' operation 'Bizerte' in December 1942, and in No.6 Commando's actions against the aerodrome at Bône.[68] Although reports from this period generally speak of a high *esprit de corps* and a degree of mutual respect between the men in these formations, the British did note certain problems as regards to the comparable quality of the American personnel over the hand-picked and highly trained Commandos. Captain Dunne, for example, spoke negatively of the RCT personnel 'whose training and discipline is greatly inferior to the English Commando troops.' [69] US personnel in No.6 Commando were returned to their units in December 1942 whilst sixty-nine American volunteers would remain with No.1 Commando for participation in regular operations until the end of January 1943.[70] Thus ended a unique, and for the main part either ignored or misunderstood (those few secondary sources citing this arrangement are prone to assume that the RCT men were Rangers), historical example of the successful integration of British and American personnel within a specialist formation and serves to highlight the willingness and ability of both nations to co-operate closely with each other in the field in commando tasks. Such instances of short term integration were, nevertheless, the exception and not the rule.

Despite there having been notable commonality between the evolution of the various Anglo-American commando and ranger formations, direct co-operation in the field between these units was a rare occurrence. The closest instance was operation 'Avalanche', the amphibious landings against Salerno in September 1943, at which the Commandos and Rangers were jointly tasked with spearheading the assault and securing the left flank of the beachhead. Prior to the landings, and in preparation for their tasks, Ranger Force (1st, 3rd and 4th Ranger Battalions) and Nos.2 and 41(RM) Commandos swapped personnel and liaison officers, Ranger Force HQ employing 'several British officers' including Royal Artillery and Royal Navy Fire Observation Officers whilst the Commandos received similar personnel as well as six 4.2-inch mortars from the US 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion of 'Ranger Force'.[71]

Possibly the closest co-ordination as occurring between the Commandos and the Rangers, however, came from the short-lived, and desperately *ad hoc*, 29th Rangers. In

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[68] Lieutenant-Colonel Trevor, CO No.1 Commando, Report on operation 'Bizerte', December 1942, KCLMA Allfrey
[69] Captain Philip Dunne, to Brigadier Laycock, undated, KCLMA Laycock File 16
[70] No.1 Commando War Diary, 31 January 1943, DEFE 2/37
[71] 'History of the Commandos in the Mediterranean', DEFE 2/700 p.37; Darby and Baumer, p.143

late-1942 with the 1st Rangers employed in North Africa it was proposed that another Ranger Battalion be formed in the UK for training and instructional purposes under the tactical control of the SS Brigade.[72] Consequently, on 1 February 1943 the 29th Infantry Division, the only US combat division in the UK at the time, consented to sending ten officers and 166 men to Achnacarry for Commando training.[73] Upon completion of their training, the understrength (comprising an HQ and two rifle companies) 29th Rangers were attached to No.4 Commando for further instruction with whom they established good relations.[74] Subsequently, in October 1943, various elements of the 29th Rangers were attached to Nos.10(IA), 12 and 14 Commandos and would participate in a number of small-scale raids against Norway and France.[75] During such operations, which aside from Dieppe would represent the only time that the Rangers would participate in the raiding programme, the 29th Rangers built up a good reputation with the Commandos 'who praised them highly'.[76] Immediately after these attachments, however, the 29th Rangers were disbanded with the men returning to their original units.

To have taken this course of action with a trained and partially experienced unit at a time when two new Ranger units were being formed in the US from raw material was a somewhat surprising, and not altogether cost-effective move. The 29th Ranger's disbandment was based on three principal factors: firstly, an adherence to the original Ranger concept which viewed these units as a training vehicle with the men therein being returned to their units once they had received training and gained experience on raids. Secondly, was the bureaucratic reason that the Ranger war establishment would only allow for a total of two Ranger battalions to be based in Britain. Finally, is the plausible judgement, as identified by Black, that the 29th Rangers were disbanded because it was expected that those Battalions training in the US were 'better trained than those who had been trained by the Commandos'.[77] The latter judgement, for which there was no solid basis and, as will be noted, was considered largely fallacious by the Rangers themselves, was a result of the US Army's clear motivation to maintain

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[72] Major Richard P. Fisk, Assistant Adjutant General, to Adjutant General, Washington, 2 December 1942, RG 407 Entry 427, Box 24157; Folder 534
[73] Black (1992), p.65
[74] *Ibid.*, p.72
[75] Macksey (1985), pp.165;183
[76] Black (1992), p.113
[77] *Ibid.*, p.125

their own identity for the Rangers and their belief that they could take what they required from the British model and improve upon it.

The 2nd and 5th Rangers were thus raised and conducted the majority of their core and formative training in the US. When the 2nd Rangers arrived in Britain in late 1943, followed shortly after by the 5th Rangers, it was intended that they should participate in the COSSAC Raids and Reconnaissance Programme preceding the invasion of France. To this end, Rangers were attached to COHQ for planning, and elements were tentatively assigned to the various 'Forfar', 'Manacle', 'Candlestick' and 'Hardtack' raids planned for the early-1944 dark periods.[78] In light of their lack of combat experience and general unfamiliarity with the equipment and landing craft involved in raiding operations it was not, however, thought possible for the Rangers to undertake these activities independently.[79] To better prepare themselves for such tasks the Rangers thus underwent a brief period of instruction on raiding techniques from the experienced personnel of No.4 Commando at Dartmouth, and Eisenhower granted 'blanket authorisation for necessary supplies' for the conduct of their raids.[80] Only following these measures was it possible to assign Rangers a clear role in the raiding programme. It was subsequently proposed that in certain operations, such as 'Hardtack 22' and 'Candlestick 4', a relatively substantial number of Rangers (between 70-100 men) would have the dominant responsibility for the raid whilst the British contribution would be limited solely to providing transport and Commando guides. In the event, however, bad weather combined with a growing reticence for raids to ensure that each of the pre-D-Day operations in which the Rangers were due to participate were either cancelled or aborted.[81]

With any pre-invasion role negated, from February 1944, the Rangers underwent formal training at the Commando Training Centre in Scotland where they were able to forge closer links with the British. This training, in the opinion of the 5th Rangers, was considered invaluable: 'The hills of Scotland proved to be more than anything that had been encountered in former Ranger training [in the US], and here Rangers were made or lost. .... Too much can not be said for the Scotland training. To it, many of the

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[78] Lieutenant-General Morgan, COSSAC to CO ETOUSA, 14 December 1943, WO 219/481
[79] Macksey (1985), p.181
[80] 'A Narrative History of the Second Ranger Infantry Battalion, 1944', RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21072; Folder 23745, INBN-2-0.3 Ch.1, pp.1-3
[81] Brigadier Durnford-Slater, 'Report on Candlestick and Hardtack Operations' January Dark Period, 17 February 1944, DEFE 2/57; also WO 106/4290

Rangers owe their lives and their success'.[82] In April 1944 Ranger links with COHQ were formalised and, after a number of requests, Lieutenant-Colonel Rudder was authorised to communicate with, and draw supplies from, COHQ directly thus enabling a greater sharing of experience and information between the Commandos and Rangers in preparation for their D-Day tasks.[83] Despite such a strong vein of co-operation having developed in the areas of training, exchanges of equipment, and operational planning etc., once the invasion of France had commenced there would be an almost total absence of further contact between the Ranger formations and British units, specialist or otherwise.

The various OSS OGs were probably the closest approximation of an all-embracing American special forces unit during the Second World War and despite their having broken free of any British model and developed a uniquely American *raison d'être*, they would remain closely associated to their British counterparts in a wide variety of operational deployments. From mid-1943 the 2nd SAS Regiment and 'Italian' OGs were both aiming to conduct similar offensive operations against northern Italy and, in the spirit of cooperation, both William Stirling and Serge Obolensky, commanding the respective groups, decided to meet with one another for a mutual exchange of ideas and to establish mechanisms for combined operational planning.[84] Soon after this first liaison both units participated in the 'Simcol' operations of October 1943. Conducted for the benefit of 'A Force' (MI9), this series of operations were focused on aiding escaping Allied prisoners of war and saw three small groups comprising a combination of both SAS and OG personnel inserted, via boat, along the Adriatic coastline of Italy to coincide with the dispatch, via parachute, of eleven OG men near Chieti.[85] Following 'Simcol' greater efforts were made for collaboration between the two units and officers for their respective 'planning and operations sections' were exchanged.[86] By the start of 1944 this fruitful arrangement had resulted in the two units jointly

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[82] 'Lead the Way, Rangers', A History of the Fifth Ranger Battalion by Henry S. Glassman, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21076; Folder INBN-5-0 pp.12-13

[83] Lieutenant-Colonel Rudder to GOC V Corps, 20 April 1944, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 24385; Folder 731

[84] Obolensky to Colonel Edward J.F. Glavin, CO 2677th HQ Company Experimental [OSS], 8 December 1943, RG 226, Entry 97, Box 41; Folder 713. This was not the first contact that OSS had had with the 2nd SAS, as prior to 'Husky' the SI Branch had attached some Italian-speaking personnel to the Regiment to aid their operational deployments. See Corvo, Max, *The OSS in Italy, 1942-1945*, (Praeger: London, 1990) pp.61-62; 80

[85] Lieutenant-Colonel Russell B. Livermore, CO OGs MED to Colonel Glavin, 10 January 1944, RG 226, Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 143; Semi-monthly OG reports by Lieutenant Emileo T. Caruso, Liaison Officer, 29 March 1944, RG 226, Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 143

[86] Obolensky to Colonel Glavin, 8 December 1943, RG 226, Entry 97, Box 41; Folder 713

conceiving a series of 'coordinated tactical operations in northern Italy' aiming to target enemy communications in support of Anzio.[87] But, as was noted in the previous chapter, the majority of such proposals were rejected. Shortly before the 2nd SAS's transfer to Britain ended this brief but fertile period of co-operation it was even suggested that Stirling command a grouping of the 2nd SAS, OGs and the French *Bataillon de Choc* for operations in support of the 'Anvil' landings on the south of France.[88]

Given the fledgling degree of co-operation between the OGs and SAS in Italy it is curious to note the general absence of a similar relationship in their deployments in France. Despite OG operations being closely wedded to the actions of both the partisans, Jedburghs, and, via a convoluted command structure, the SAS Brigade, the OGs had negligible direct co-operation with their British SAS 'counterparts' in France, and only a modicum with the French SAS in Brittany. Before the invasion, however, elements of the OGs had certainly sought a closer relationship with the SAS, with the likes of Major Edwin Black, responsible for OG planning at SFHQ, suggesting the establishment of a joint SFHQ-SAS committee and the attachment of SAS officers to SFHQ for training.[89] In light of the complex command arrangements and the degree of mutual suspicion which was endemic to the pre-invasion planning for these groups (issues to be addressed in the next chapter), such suggestions were, however, largely ignored. Once in the field, different areas of operation; different timetables of insertion; and a slight diversity in roles generally transpired to preclude significant contact between the SAS and OGs. On the few occasions when OGs did come into contact with the SAS, such as with the OG operations 'Adrian' or 'Percy Red', any collaboration was opportunistic and strictly tactical.[90]

Although the 'French' and 'Italian' OGs forged a modest bond with their SAS colleagues, and in Far East Detachment 404's OGs had infrequent collaboration with varied British specialist elements based in Ceylon,[91] it would be the 'Yugoslav' and 'Greek' OGs, however, that had the closest and most frequent co-operation with

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[87] Colonel Glavin to G-3 AFHQ, 11 December 1943, WO 204/12980; Colonel Glavin and Lieutenant-Colonel Stirling to Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, AFHQ, 13 December 1943, WO 204/12837

[88] Colonel B.M. Archibald, AFHQ G-3 on 'Command of Special Raiding Forces', 13 January 1944, WO 204/1565

[89] OSS/London War Diaries, Vol.2, KCLMA MF 204

[90] Reports on operation 'Percy Red': RG 226, Entry 148, Box 83; Folder 1212; Dear, p.179

[91] See, RG 226, Entry 144, Box 70; Folders 635 and 639/A

British formations. In January 1944 twelve officers and 120 men of these OGs were sent to Vis alongside No.2 Commando and placed under the local tactical control of Brigadier Churchill's 2nd SS Brigade. Living and working closely together on Vis ensured that close bonds developed between the British and American personnel. Michael McConville, a Royal Marine Commando officer on Vis, found the OG's 'refreshingly frank', when first deployed 'they admitted cheerfully to complete inexperience, they would put themselves in the hands of Jack Churchill [CO No.2 Commando]. If he thought their concepts sound, well and good. If not, they would do whatever he advised.' The Commandos on Vis provided an improvised training programme for the OGs during which 'American open-mindedness and enthusiasm continued to impress'.[92] In return for such instruction, the OGs would, with their linguistic talents, help foster smooth relations with their Yugoslav hosts, and would provide interpreters for operations in conjunction with partisans.[93]

From Vis the OGs mounted a number of operations alongside the Commandos, notable examples being the 26 January 1944 raid on the island of Hvar where thirty OGs joined No.2 Commando in the attack,[94] or the March 1944 raid on Solta in which almost the entire OG complement on Vis co-operated with the Commando on what was later dubbed a 'model combined operation'.[95] The OGs also acted in a supportive capacity and, as at Mljet and Brac in May and June 1944, respectively, would perform 'headquarters security' for the Commandos' attack.[96] In April 1944 when offensive raids from Vis were being curtailed by inadequate and out-of-date intelligence Major Lovell of the OGs suggested to Brigadier Churchill that his men could help alleviate this deficiency by establishing wireless coast watch stations on outlying islands. In so doing, the OGs established and ran a complete operations room on Vis that became the 'intelligence and planning centre' for both OSS and the Commandos.[97] On the whole, as acknowledged by both parties, the relations between the OGs and the Commandos

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[92] McConville, Michael, *A Small War in the Balkans*, (Macmillan: London, 1986) p.118
[93] For information see: RG 226, Entry 144, Box 68; Folder 586
[94] Excerpt from USAFIME Accomplishment Report, 1 January 1944 to 30 June 1944, RG 226, Entry 144, Box 68; Folder 590
[95] 'History of the Commandos in the Mediterranean', DEFE 2/700, pp.162-169; Major Philip G. Lovell, CO 'Greek/Yugoslav' OGs to Lieutenant-Colonel Paul West, Chief Operations Officer Special Bari Section, 1 April 1944, RG 226, Entry 144, Box 68; Folder 598
[96] See various OG reports: RG 226, Entry 144, Box 68; Folders 591-592
[97] Lovell to West, *op. cit.*

on Vis were excellent, and the planning and execution of their operations against the Dalmatian coast well integrated.[98]

The OGs on Vis also developed close relations with the Raiding Support Regiment for whose heavier weapons troops they would often provide escort and security.[99] In May 1944 this relationship was further strengthened when the 'Greek' OGs joined elements of the RSR undertaking 'Noah's Ark' operations in Greece. When the two units were deployed together their actions in the field were mutually supportive. During operation 'Kirkstone' of June 1944 which targeted rail networks north of Kaitsa, for example, the OG men would undertake reconnaissance tasks and provide close protection for RSR mortar teams and demolition parties.[100] Living and working together behind enemy lines led to the OGs and RSR personnel developing some very close bonds. In the opinion of OG Captain Cronje, the men 'get along very well. No distinction is made between the two groups.'[101] The OGs praised the RSR as being 'highly skilled and tremendously effective in support of the Operational Groups and Andartes, and were likewise a fine example of aggressive and competent soldiering'.[102] The only American gripe of operating with these British elements seems to have been directed, as was quite common, towards the quality of the food and cigarettes available.[103] Personnel of these 'Greek' OGs would subsequently operate with the LRDG who provided both guides and reception committees to OGs operations in exchange for the attachment of OG men to serve as interpreters.[104] These various OG deployments thus provide clear illustration of harmonious, multifaceted cooperation between British and American specialist formations in the various fields of training, planning, and execution of operations.[105]

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[98] No.2 Commando War Diaries, 1944, WO 218/64; Major Samuel C. King Jr., Executive Officer 'Greek/Yugoslav' OGs, 'Report for period 1-15 November 1944', RG 226, Entry 144, Box 68; Folder 597

[99] Captain Richard R. Quay, Executive Officer, 'Greek/Yugoslav' OGs, to CO OG MED, 15 June 1944, RG 226, Entry 144, Box 68; Folder 598

[100] For reports, see: RG 226, Entry 99, Box 45; Folders 4 and 5; also RSR situation reports, WO 170/1364

[101] Captain Cronje to OC RSR, 2 August 1944, WO 170/1364

[102] Report on 'Greek' OG operations by Major Fred Bielaski, CO, 24 December 1944, RG 226, Entry 99, Box 45; Folder 4

[103] Lieutenant John Giannaris, 'Report on Operations and Conditions in Greece at Kirkstone', 28 October 1944, RG 226, Entry 144, Box 68; Folder 587

[104] See for example: LRDG Operation Instruction No.140 (A Sqn), 2 September 1944, AIR 23/7802; and various documents in: 204/10306

[105] For a personal account of RSR and OG co-operation in Greece, see: Reid, Francis, *Resistance Fighter*, (Brown: London, 1957) pp.95-98

In the training, development and equipping of maritime special forces the Anglo-American alliance was just as significant as it was with those land-orientated formations. The British naval-orientated special force with the most intensive relationship with the US military was the SRU. Because of the unsuitability of British coastal waters for the training of combat swimmers CCOR had arranged for the SRU to conduct its training on the coast of California. Based at the USMC's Camp Pendelton, the SRU developed its own training regime independent of the Americans but was aided by the attachment of a liaison officer, Captain E.H. 'Dutch' Smith, USMC, who helped Wright develop his exercises.[106] At Pendleton the SRU came into contact with both the 4th Raider Battalion and the emergent USMC Reconnaissance Company which would provide the Unit with much 'valuable and willing assistance' and co-operate in various exercises, experiments and training procedures.[107]

In October 1943, following discussions between Donovan and Mountbatten, the MU had raised a 40-man combat swimmer unit along SRU lines.[108] This MU group established their training establishment only one-hundred-and-fifty yards away from the SRU base at Pendleton and would copy their training programme 'in every respect', with Captain 'Dutch' Smith becoming the MU training officer.[109] Wright provided comprehensive 'information regarding the objectives and schedules of their training', and for a two month period the two units operated closely with one another mutually investigating the still untrammelled area of underwater and surface swimming for sabotage and reconnaissance.[110] The SRU benefited as much from the relationship as did the MU, and Laycock was quick to express to Admiral King the 'great value ... [of] the liaison afforded with US Units working on similar lines.'[111] Upon completion of their training in California, the OSS group followed the SRU to Nassau, and later, a group of nine men were sent to Britain. This relationship which was so solid in training and development would, however, never extend to operational deployment.[112]

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[106] Wright, pp.39-40
[107] General H.M. Smith,'Equipment for Amphibious Reconnaissance Company, FIFTHPHIBCORPS', 31 August 1943, RG 127, History and Museums Division, Subject File Relating to World War II, Box 7; Folder 9
[108] History of the OSS MU, RG 226, Entry 99, Box 98; Folder 4, p.21
[109] Lieutenant-Commander Wright to CCO, DEFE 2/741
[110] H.G.A. Woolley, CCO/OSS Liaison Officer to Laycock, 15 December 1943, DEFE 2/741
[111] Laycock to Admiral King, 13 November 1943, DEFE 2/741
[112] Wright, p.97

The MU London Branch was established in June 1943 and, unsurprisingly, developed strong links with its British counterpart organisations. In the belief that they had 'everything to gain' from forging close relations with the British, the MU personnel immediately toured various British specialist units, including the SBS, COPPs, and RMBPD and, finding some 'damned good allies' therein, received 'general instruction' on British techniques and methods.[113] In a familiar pattern, the Americans hoped that attachment these elements would enable them to 'learn, perfect, and if possible better the Commando [*sic*.] technique in Small Boat Operations'.[114] Despite the disparity in size and experience, COHQ and the various British special maritime formations also had much to gain from cooperation with the MU, benefiting principally from the exchange of information and equipment, not to mention the welcome reinforcement to overstretched operational requirements.[115] With such motivations in mind, COHQ and OSS were able to establish an 'efficient exchange arrangement' whereby 'COSD [Combined Operations Supply Depot] would supply MU and other US groups wherever possible and in turn … OSS and other US groups such as the USMC, NCDU, etc. would meet the requirements of CCO in various theatres'.[116] Arrangements such as this would help lead to a greater degree of standardisation of specialist equipment, and ergo methods, between Anglo-American specialist maritime formations.[117] Ultimately, however, the London MU had little opportunity to conduct operations from Britain being hindered both by increasingly unsuitable strategic circumstances and by a general absence of US Naval support. In a common theme for maritime special forces, therefore, British patronage became a cornerstone for the MU's deployment. As the MU freely recognised, without the 'generous and understanding help' of their British counterparts they would have been 'able to do very little, if anything'.[118]

The closest operational link between a MU group and the British occurred in Italy with the MU headed by Lieutenant Richard Kelly. As with those MU groups in Britain, this unit remained heavily reliant on the use of Royal Navy fast surface craft for its

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[113] OSS MU ETOUSA to Lieutenant D.J. Roberts, Chief MU, 18 December 1943, RG 226, Entry 144, Box 72; Folder 4, London
[114] Lieutenant-Commander Guest, Chief MU London to Colonel D.K. Bruce, 8 November 1943, RG 226, Entry 148, Box 83; Folder 1200
[115] Minutes of COHQ Amphibious Warfare Sub-Committee, 4 January 1944, DEFE 2/1035
[116] Lieutenant C. Gilpatric, Executive Officer, MU London to Lieutenant Roberts, Chief MU, 23 January 1944, RG 226, Entry 144, Box 72; Folder 4
[117] Minutes of COHQ meeting, 31 March 1944, RG 226, Entry 148, Box 83; Folder 1200
[118] MU London War Diary, RG 226, Entry 148, Box 83; Folder 1199; Commander Lester Armour, Deputy Director OSS ETO to Captain F.A. Slocum, RN, DDOD(I), 13 November 1944, RG 226, Entry 148, Box 83; Folder 1200

operations but, unlike from Britain, in the Italian theatre there remained ample opportunities for deployment.[119] By August 1944 a successful series of operations by this MU in providing clandestine transportation for various British agencies had proven 'the feasibility of cooperating with the British and obtaining their wholehearted aid in MU operations'.[120] This MU was subsequently placed under the general control of Eighth Army and its operations became closely integrated with the work of SOE, MI9 and PPA. By 1945 this group had become so well regarded by the British that it was appointed the 'responsible boating organisation' for British-dominated operations around Lake Commachio, a commitment which would see it work in close co-operation with both the Commandos, COPPs and the SBS (Service).[121] In addition to such activities, this Italian MU would also lend personnel to the LRDG to serve as liaison officers and translators for their September 1944 operations in Istria[122] and, later still, would work alongside PPA in their operations around the mouth of the Po and during their advance towards Venice.[123]

Whilst in discussion with General Donovan in late-1943 Mountbatten made a request for personnel to help share the burden of undertaking beach reconnaissance tasks in SEAC as he believed that it was 'impossible, and improbable' that the COPP Depot in Britain would be able to provide this theatre with enough personnel to accommodate the demand.[124] Donovan accented, and in early-1944 MU personnel destined for the Far East were introduced to British COHQ specialist personnel in London and were given 'complete explanations of CCO techniques and equipment'.[125] Upon arrival in theatre the MUs, who would remain heavily reliant on British shipping (particularly submarines), forged close relations with their British counterparts and both parties benefited from 'a mutual exchange of facilities and an opportunity to compare

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[119] Lieutenant William H. Pendelton, Chief, MU NATO to Chief, MU, Washington, D.C, 28 June 1944, RG 226, Entry 143, Box 5; Folder 77

[120] Lieutenant (jg) Bennett M. Cave, OSS, to Lieutenant Pendleton, Chief MU NATO, 11 August 1944, RG 226, Entry 143, Box 5; Folder 77

[121] Lieutenant Kelly, MU Operational Reports, February-March 1945, RG 226, Entry 143, Box 6, Folder 96

[122] Lieutenant Kelly to OSS AFHQ, 3 October 1944, RG 226, Entry 143, Box 5; Folder 77; In what was probably a reciprocal arrangement, two LRDG officers were sent to America to observe and advise the Americans on their activities. See Thompson (1998), pp.358-359

[123] COS Eighth Army to OSS AFHQ, 27 June 1945, WO 204/12982; In various deployments PPA had close relations with this MU and illustrative of bond that developed between the two units are PPA Captain John Campbell's recollections of Kelly of the MU as being one of 'the best friends I have ever had'. Campbell, John, *The Green Box*, (Unpublished memoir)

[124] Commander R. Davis Halliwell to Mr. J.M. Scribner, 12 January 1944, RG 226, Entry 92, Box 491; Folder 15

[125] Lieutenant-Commander R.R. Guest, Chief MU London to Mr. Scribner and Lieutenant Roberts, 19 February 1944, RG 226, Entry 148, Box 83; Folder 1199, MU War Diary Part I

respective methods of operation'.[126] Although tactical co-operation between the MU and their British counterparts within SEAC was rare, there was a notable amount of combined planning and operational-level integration between these units.[127]

Although the influence of the British model and of British assistance on American adoption and development of irregular capabilities during the period 1940-43 was pronounced, the pattern of the British 'teacher' and American 'student' was not, however, uniformly correct. For, as has been previously noted, in the areas of beach reconnaissance, assault pilotage, and combat demolitions American capabilities and methods were developed either independently, or through direct, mutually supportive, collaboration with the British. The manner in which the US NCDUs and British LCOCUs developed is illustrative of this. In January 1943, following a tour of British establishments, Captain Alfred G. Hoel, USN submitted a report which served to illuminate the US Navy Engineer Board to early British experiments into underwater demolitions and provided notes on their training of 'Boom Commandos'.[128] Hoel's recommendations were followed by a combined mission consisting of Major Kennedy, US Army and Major Fairbairn, Royal Engineers which was sent to the Maryland and Fort Pierce ATBs in early-1943 to advise on 'special demolition problems', and it was this mission that subsequently helped to forge the NCDU syllabus and help train the first teams for operation 'Husky'.[129] Despite providing such assistance, the British were by no means further advanced nor more experienced in these fields than were the Americans. Their first 'Boom Commandos' (later renamed LCOCUs) were not trained, nor ready for deployment until February 1943 and had had no operational deployment until 'Husky', at which stage the first NCDUs had been created. From mid-1943 onwards, therefore, there was much liaison between British and American groups and regular exchange visits at which information and methods were shared.[130] Once the UDT organisation emerged to cope with the exigencies of the Pacific War the British

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[126] Report on MU in SEAC, RG 226, Entry 99, Box 64; Folder 5, p.14
[127] See, for example, Report on operation 'Target', HQ 1st OG SEAC, January 1945, RG 226, Entry 144, Box 70; Folder 637
[128] O'Dell, James Douglas, *The Water is Never Cold*, (Brassey's: Washington D.C., 2000) p.7
[129] MU report on NCDU, 2 September 1943, RG 226,Entry 92, Box 534; Folder 8; Joint report of Major C.E. Kennedy and Major R.R. Fairbairn to Commander, Amphibious Forces, US Atlantic Fleet, 5 August 1943, RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45, Box 281; Folder CCS 370.03
[130] Rear-Admiral C.S. Daniel, 'Establishment of a Boom Commando', 25 June 1943, DEFE 2/963; OSS MU ETOUSA to Chief MU, 18 December 1943, RG 226, Entry 144, Box 72; Folder 4

capacity to be 'student' was well highlighted as they undertook initiatives to learn and assimilate the emerging American techniques, lessons and equipment.[131]

To deal with amphibious reconnaissance and assault pilotage Britain and the US almost simultaneously, but independently, developed their COPP and S&R units. Despite a notable absence of any Allied interchange of ideas in the inception process of these units, there would ultimately be a pronounced spirit of Anglo-American co-operation within these fields. The 'Torch' landings bore witness to significant Allied integration in pilotage tasks with the S&R men being responsible for the pilotage and guidance of No.1 Commando's landing,[132] whilst the COPP forerunner 'Koodoo-Inhuman' conversely guided the landing of the 1st Rangers at Arzew.[133] Following 'Torch', it became widely understood that, for the benefit of forthcoming major combined amphibious landings, the development of a standardised Allied approach to beach reconnaissance and pilotage was essential. Thus as soon as the COPPs were formerly created, it was recommended that Lieutenant George Hoague, USN 'be represented on the [COPP] Training Sub-Committee'.[134] Meanwhile the likes of US Army Captain George Bright were schooled in British techniques before being sent to the S&R School.[135]

In April 1943 S&R personnel were dispatched to Malta to help alleviate the shortage of COPPs available for reconnaissance and pilotage tasks against Sicily. To the overstretched British, whose lack of properly trained personnel had been exacerbated by the recent loss of a number of COPP personnel in pre-'Husky' reconnaissances, the prospect of reinforcement was enthusiastically greeted. Upon the arrival of the Americans in Malta, however, the British impression of the state of the S&R's training and equipment (much of which had been left in the US because of an oversight) was generally unfavourable.[136] Lieutenant McHarg, CO COPP 4, believed the S&R's methods of operating 'a portable echo sounding set from a rubber dingy' to be unsuitable for pre-invasion tasks as they were 'much too clumsy for use from submarines and their silhouette too big to escape detection on well guarded

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[131] See, for example, Reports on Leyte Operation, DEFE 2/963
[132] Dwyer (1993), p.21
[133] Macksey (1985), p.148
[134] Minutes of COHQ meeting, 27 November 1942, DEFE 2/4
[135] O'Dell (2000), p.20
[136] C-in-C Mediterranean to First Sea Lord, 1 May 1943, DEFE 2/741

beaches'.[137] It would not be until they had received instruction from the British on their favoured reconnaissance tactic of utilising canoes launched from submarines that S&R personnel were ultimately able to participate alongside the COPPs in the Sicily reconnaissances.[138] Before and during the subsequent landings against Salerno and Anzio there would be much closer co-operation, in both reconnaissance and pilotage tasks, between the COPPs and S&Rs.[139]

Preparations for the invasion of France provided further incentives for the development of a harmonious Allied approach to COPP and S&R tasks. Following their participation in the Anzio landings two S&R teams (each of one officer and four men) were sent to Britain to be stationed with COPPs in preparation for pre-invasion tasks. Initially it was hoped that the S&R personnel would work alongside COPP 2 (later expanded as the 712th LCP Survey Flotilla) in undertaking soundings, yet a range of factors would transpire to deny concerted use of S&Rs in such a capacity.[140] Because of 'an apparent error in their orders' the S&Rs had arrived in the UK without any of their special stores or equipment; they were thus heavily reliant on British generosity and patronage. Although the Admiralty was willing to provide a LCN for the S&Rs, it was thought unwise to have a single American craft (the two S&R teams were only of a size to man a single LCN) operating in an otherwise exclusively British flotilla. Furthermore, unlike COPP 2, the S&Rs were not thought properly trained in the specialist techniques of taking soundings and sonic bearings from LCNs, nor were they trained in the 'X-Craft' submersible which other COPPs were utilising for 'Neptune' reconnaissances.[141] These limitations, combined with the fact that many of the projected tasks were adequately catered for by existent British formations, ensured the ultimate employment of the S&Rs from Britain was limited to sporadic sounding tasks undertaken via individuals paired with COPP personnel.[142] Although Britain dominated the special reconnaissance operations for both the British and American Normandy beaches, on D-Day itself the pilotage tasks of these units were generally

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[137] Lieutenant N.T. McHarg, CO COPP 4 to OC COPP Depot, 2 August 1943, DEFE 2/741
[138] Cunningham, p.180
[139] Before Anzio, shortages in COPPs ensured that the S&Rs also worked closely with 'Z' SBS. Courtney (1983), p.118; Dwyer (1993), p.55
[140] Minutes of COS (X) meeting, 17 September 1943, ADM 179/347; Trenowden, Ian, *Stealthily by Night*, (Crécy Books, 1995) p.93
[141] Lieutenant-Commander F.M. Berncastle 'Sounding in the Dark – The Hydrographic Surveying of Beaches for use by Assault Craft and Prior to the Landings on the Coast of Normandy, 1944', IWM Berncastle 02/56/1; Admiral B.H. Ramsay to CCO, 11 December 1943, RG 331, Entry 12, Box 14; Folder SHAEF/6RX/INT
[142] Dwyer (1993), p.69

conducted on national lines with only a handful of British personnel working alongside US Naval forces.[143]

Between the Anglo-American specialist formations of the Second World War there was certainly a strong vein of co-operation, and on occasions, dependency between the two allies. The significance of the Anglo-American alliance in the evolution of wartime specialist formations was acute. For the US it was crucial. Had it not been for the British example and their willingness to both share this and encourage the US to embark on irregular ventures, it seems unlikely that they would have participated in this field to the extent which they ultimately did. This is particularly apparent in the motivations behind the US adoption of ranger-style forces; but also applies, at least in part, to their establishment of OSS and its ancillary special forces such as the MU or OGs. Although the US proved more than capable of raising specialist formations in response to specific exigencies (as with the Alamo Scouts) or to cater for certain tasks (such as amphibious reconnaissance and demolitions), had an accessible British model not been in existence, it would appear that American forays into irregular warfare would have been significantly subdued.

During the formative periods of practically all American specialist formations the British were further advanced. The years 1942-43 have been called "'the period of British strategic hegemony"' and the development of specialist formations certainly appears to mirror this.[144] Two years' of practical experience had ensured that, in this area, Britain was the dominant partner in the alliance, and would thus provide the models for many of the first US specialist formations. The path which the US would have to follow in order catch up with this British lead required them to accept an initial position as student, to bow to British experience and, to an extent, sacrifice control for knowledge. In the British-dominated European and Mediterranean theatres, therefore, US formations were heavily reliant on British patronage and often would have to conform to British standards and doctrines in order to gain employment, as seen with the examples of OSS agents being subject to SOE vetting and training before their dispatch to the continent; the US-trained 2nd and 5th Rangers being trained by Commandos before they could be committed to the pre-D-Day raiding programme; or

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[143] Trenowden, p.140

[144] Danchev, Alex 'Great Britain: The Indirect Strategy' in Reynolds, David, Kimball, Warren F. and Chubarian, A.O. (eds.) *Allies at war: the Soviet, American, and British experience, 1939-1945*, (St. Martins: New York, 1994) p.6

the S&Rs having to perfect British submarine-launched reconnaissance techniques before they could be employed before 'Husky'. The British model prevailed to dominate the American practice of special operations.

With a few exceptions, such as Detachment 101 in Burma, it would not be until 1944 that the US had become sufficiently experienced and mobilised to be in a position to properly contest the British lead in irregular operations. By this stage, however, independence was largely impracticable, and parity was becoming a practical reality. Once the US had two years' of experience under *their* belt they began conducting almost the full gamut of specialist activities in practically every theatre of operation. David Reynolds has claimed that in Europe D-Day 'proved the fulcrum' for a transition towards American dominance, and it is by no means a coincidence that concerted American use of special forces, often matching British contributions, occurred primarily *after* D-Day.[145] By 1945 it was clear that in the broader alliance Britain had become the junior partner and, although Britain never quite relinquished its wartime dominance in irregular fields, it is certainly worth acknowledging that by 1945 US special forces units, but not their ranger formations, were as widely employed as their British counterparts.

The British had a substantial role in influencing, both actively and passively, the Americans to adopt specialist formations and to develop irregular capabilities. Despite the best efforts of the US military to take only what they needed from the British model, and to retain their national identity (which certain formations like the OGs managed to do), the British laid the foundations for many American units. Whilst the British commonly provided both model, experience and, occasionally, the means, for the American creation and deployment of specialist formations; American value to the British, was, with few exceptions (such as the sharing of NCDU and UDT techniques, or the accommodation of the SRU in California), more intangible. The greatest contribution of the US to British irregular efforts was in alleviating the burden of mounting operations, and the provision of additional personnel for their conduct; something particularly valued following the dramatic expansion of effort that both the resistance war and the conduct of large-scale combined amphibious assaults required. Also of great significance was the US providing Britain with welcome reinforcement in aircraft, supplies and resources through which the prosecution of plans with

[145] Reynolds (1996), p.15

partisans could be expressed; as well as, when sufficiently experienced, the American contribution to developing new tactics and equipment such as firearms, explosives, radios, swim fins, breathing apparatus, and small surface and submersible craft.

One perception that definitely prevailed in certain quarters throughout the war was that the British supplied the brains and the experience, and the Americans the resources.[146] In the field of specialist formations this perception was partially borne out. The British 'brains' and 'experience' are well illustrated; and in the areas of supplying aircraft and equipment for extended operations in depth the US, from mid-1944 onwards, certainly took on much of the burden. There were, however, exceptions to both these trends, where American 'brains' in the examples of the S&Rs, NCDUs and UDTs were certainly welcome; and in the provision of training establishments and operational craft for deployments, the British certainly pulled their weight. Mackenzie emphasised well this complex interdependency when he noted, in regards to the close relationship between SOE and OSS:

> OSS could hardly move without British organisation and British knowledge, cramping though it sometimes found them: SOE drew largely on American stores, above all on American aircraft, and American brains and energy contributed much to the liveliness of an organisation which might have easily become narrow and over-tired as the war went on.[147]

In application to the alliance as a whole, David Reynolds has emphasised that: 'Ultimately, the British needed the Americans more than the Americans needed the British.'[148] In application to the, albeit, niche area of specialist formations, however, this seems to be reversed with Britain remaining the dominant partner throughout the war.

An examination of the Anglo-American relationship within the context of special operations well illuminates a number of clear examples of integration and very close co-operation between British and American personnel at the 'grassroots' level in both training, planning and (albeit less frequently) operational deployment. During the strains of training and in the rigours of battle, relationships developed between the men of the two nations which often transcended national identity. It is not without significance that, as Kenneth Macksey has emphasised, much 'extensive cementing' of

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[146] See Eisenhower, p.394
[147] Mackenzie, p.393
[148] Reynolds (1996), p.15

the Anglo-American 'alliance at ground level was performed by the arbiters of raiding'.[149] Nor it is without significance that the overwhelmingly good relations between British and American specialist formations transcended many of the more general animosities that troubled the broader alliance. The small-scale and cost-effective nature of special forces provided a politically-acceptable mechanism through which both Britain and the US could conduct military operations on a global level without many of the traditional limitations or dilemmas which troubled alliance strategy. Although this field represents only a tiny area of a global alliance, the example of Allied co-operation in the field of specialist formations provides a window of, what at times, was model co-operation between Britain and the United States. Had the alliance not functioned as smoothly and as successfully as it ultimately did, it is clear that the US adoption and development of specialist formations would have been severely curtailed; and had this occurred, and with the full burden of mounting irregular operations falling on the British, it is equally likely that their enthusiasm for such ventures would have been significantly reduced. Simply put, the Anglo-American alliance was an essential factor in forging the manner and extent to which both nations adopted, developed and utilised specialist formations and waged irregular warfare during the Second World War.

[149] Macksey (1985), p.210

Chapter 4
Command and Control

The command and control of specialist formations presents what is perhaps a uniquely difficult prospect. For, to be effective, it requires, almost at the same time, two contradictory and often intractable mechanisms. On the one hand, there is the requirement for a malleable, innovative and loose approach to command that gives a degree of independence and autonomy to individual units, and which does not to stifle their individual initiative and flexibility. On the other, there is an even greater requirement for a suitably restrictive centralised control mechanism capable of harnessing these units and directing their actions to the best benefit of greater operational and strategic plans; lest they become wasteful, redundant, or come into conflict with the activities of other actors. Centralisation is also important so as not to burden unnecessarily small operational units with the dilemmas of administration and logistics etc. and equally, so as not to allow these units to place undue strain upon the conventional channels having to cater for them. These requirements and the best method of employing these formations were, however, far from understood at the outset of the Second World War. There was little or no precedent in place to guide commanders on how irregular forces should be organised, directed and controlled. Mechanisms, methods and practices for the effective command, administration and application of these formations thus all had to be virtually invented over the course of the war. This chapter serves to highlight the Anglo-American command perceptions of specialist formations, and to chart the evolution in the manner in which they were commanded, controlled and coordinated. Understanding the development of these approaches is central to comprehending the broader evolution and utility of commandos and special forces during the course of the Second World War.[1]

Although at times enthusiastic, command preconceptions of specialist formations were, more often than not, marked with scepticism and animosity. Military resentment of the unconventional is understandable. The unique composition, recruitment practices, missions, equipment, discipline and methods of administration that separated specialist formations from conventional forces led to suspicion, whilst their exclusivity and aura of mystery (or, conversely, pronounced publicity) undoubtedly fostered an impression

[1] See Appendix I for various organisational charts of command hierarchies highlighted in this chapter.

of favouritism and led to resentment. Mass armies do not like elites; their very existence is an implied slur on the martial and 'non-special' attributes of everybody else. The result, as Peter Fleming contended, was that the 'unorthodox warrior always fights on two fronts'.[2] For every Churchill, Wavell, or Gubbins, those 'champions' of specialist formations, 'a thousand regular officers existed', in both Britain and the United States 'who, wedded to conventional military tradition disdained irregular warfare'.[3] Friction with those irregular characters so often prominent amongst these units went no way to improving matters and much animosity was directed at this 'gallant madman ... for he is himself unorthodox, impatient of discipline and invariably ignorant or casual regarding service custom and procedure, so that unless properly led and instructed he gives offence through this same casualness or ignorance'.[4] The expansionist and 'prima donna' behaviour so often associated with these individuals was (and still is) particularly resented and, if unchecked, could rapidly escalate 'to an active and mutual antagonism with negative consequences for operations'.[5]

Although a number of formations received high-level support from 'champions' in their inception, it should not be assumed that these units faced fewer obstacles. The opposite may well in fact be the case. Staffs and subordinates who had to directly deal with the demands of irregular units were seldom enthusiastic about catering to the needs of the 'playthings' or 'pets' of politicians and high commanders.[6] Unorthodox and relatively junior officers bypassing bureaucratic normalcy and getting a 'direct-line' to the top could be the cause of significant resentment and jealousies amongst command hierarchies. As Churchill emphasised in reference to the Commandos, 'resistances ... increased as the professional ladder was descended.'[7] Such opposition had the potential to cause genuine problems for the use of specialist formations, for as William Stirling expressed whilst vying for the employment of his 2nd SAS Regiment

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[2] Fleming, Peter, 'Unorthodox Warriors', *Journal of RUSI*, Vol.CIV, No.616, (November 1959), p.381
[3] Asprey, Robert B., *War in the Shadows,* (William Morrow: New York, 1994) p.299
[4] Admiralty paper, 'Transfer of unorthodox offensive units to the control of DDOD(I)', 30 July 1944, ADM 1/16957
[5] Gray (1996), p.183
[6] Beaumont, Roger, *Special Operations and Elite Units*, (Greenwood: Connecticut, 1988) p.7; Bidwell, Shelford, 'Irregular Warfare: Partisans, Raiders and Guerrillas', *Journal of RUSI*, Vol.122, No.3 (September 1977), p.80
[7] Churchill Vol.II, p.413

in support of the invasion of Sicily, 'when the staff ... gets between the [higher] commander and SAS Regiment, the latter has little prospect of useful employment'.[8]

Overcoming the obstacles of orthodoxy was not easy, yet with time and, most importantly, tangible successes in the field, progress was made. The LRDG's early successes opened up many orthodox minds within GHQ MEF to the potential of special forces and helped ensure that by operation 'Crusader' they were willing to sponsor other specialist ventures to aid their offensive. The Commando successes on Vaagso, the Lofotens, or St. Nazaire similarly gave a boost of confidence to the Commando idea which was flagging as a result of their first operations having been of negligible value. The American experience has similar comparisons: the actions of the USMC Raiders on Tulagi and Guadalcanal was sufficient to lead to the temporary silencing of some of their critics who had steadfastly resisted the idea of an elite within an elite, and led to an expansion of the concept; the Ranger's performance in North Africa 'won over their superiors';[9] whilst the FSSF's assault on Monte la Difensa and Monte la Remetanea ensured the Force became 'idealised' by General Mark Clark.[10] Successes aside, certain units were held in higher esteem within the establishment purely because of the roles that they undertook. Opposition to units focused on intelligence gathering or reconnaissance was significantly less acute than that towards those 'pirates' or 'thugs' engaged in the 'ungentlemanly' pursuits of raiding and harassment.[11] Similarly, conventional mindsets were more prone to accept the military value of commando formations or 'shock troops' for hazardous tasks than they were of special forces performing nonregular missions.[12]

Alongside a lack of sympathy and support for specialist formations lay another, more serious, and not always unrelated, problem: a lack of knowledge and understanding about their function and potential utility. Colin Gray has emphasised a 'trained incapacity, a *déformation professionelle*, on the part of conventional military minds to grasp the principles of special warfare. .... If superior commanders do not appreciate or do not like what special operations forces might do, the strategic utility of those forces will be strictly moot'.[13] The proliferation of special forces and commandos in

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[8] Stirling to 15 Army Group, 1 July 1943, RG 226, Entry 97, Box 41; Folder 713
[9] Hogan, *Raiders*, p.29
[10] Adleman and Walton, pp.154-155
[11] Cohen, p.53
[12] Gray (1996), p.167
[13] *Ibid.*, pp.150-151

the Second World War represented a fundamentally new approach to warfare, utilising new methods and equipment and occurring at an unprecedented depth. The mechanisms by which to control and wield this new weapon were by no means innate, and there was little precedent in place to guide on the best approach. Broader understanding of the potential of irregular units would only develop with experience and the creation of dedicated command branches and staffs to direct these formations.

The most significant command arrangement for British specialist formations was Combined Operations Headquarters. Developing immediately after the inception of the Commandos, COHQ had, as part of its broader mandate, both the responsibility for the administration, training and tasking of the Commandos under its SS Brigade, and the planning and mounting of amphibious raids from Britain. In actually fulfilling this directive, however, COHQ would face many bureaucratic difficulties. Its creation as a brand new agency answerable only to the Chiefs of Staffs (COS) had antagonised a number of powerful figures in a sceptical Whitehall, and following the earliest Commando raids being of dubious worth the confidence in Admiral Keyes's ability to conduct these operations had notably declined. By September 1941 it was decreed that no amphibious operation, however small, would be mounted by COHQ against the Channel coasts without the express authority of both GHQ Home Forces and the COS. The COHQ role thus became limited to planning, training for, and providing advice on raiding operations (powers technically shared by Home Forces), with regional Home Commands having the mounting authority for operations launched from their areas of responsibility.[14] Only against Norway, an 'administratively easy target' because it came under the jurisdiction of C-in-C Home Fleet, was COHQ able to undertake raiding without the 'web of conflicting red tape'.[15] Operations against the Channel coastline, the originally envisioned target for Commando raids, were at this time, however, heavily hamstrung by the lack of 'any precise system for planning, mounting and executing' Commando operations. It was a fact Keyes vehemently emphasised to the House of Commons upon his dismissal as DCO: '"Inter-services committees and sub-committees had become the dictators of policy instead of the servants of those who bore full responsibility; by concentrating on the difficulties and dangers of every

[14] COS Committee directive to ACO, 17 October 1941, CAB 80/31/29
[15] Ladd (1978), p.27; Seymour, p.15

amphibious project .... the planners have succeeded in thwarting execution until it is too late".'[16]

The (somewhat controversial) appointment of Lord Louis Mountbatten as Advisor on Combined Operations (later CCO) in October 1941 injected the organisation with a new aura of vitality. In March 1942 Mountbatten was promoted to Vice-Admiral, granted a chair on the COS Committee, and appointed 'the sole co-ordinating authority for all raids on the western seaboard of Europe'. Despite COHQ's increasing powers, Mountbatten's ability to conduct regular raids remained hindered by significant bureaucratic hurdles. Any COHQ plan still had to be submitted for approval by the COS Committee (but no longer GHQ Home Forces), and if authorised, would then be placed under the command of a Naval C-in-C of a Home Port for execution. Furthermore, this naval commander, the three Army Home Force Commanders (Southern, South-Eastern and Eastern), and the RAF authorities all could veto the execution of an operation.[17] In July 1942 a frustrated Mountbatten complained that he 'found it difficult to translate this responsibility [for raiding operations] into practice because of the system of divided control which at present guides operations of this nature'. He recommended that a new streamlined system should be instigated which would, if not grant him executive powers, at least make the process of planning and mounting operations reliant upon the 'smallest number of authorities that is permissible'.[18]

Mountbatten was a keen advocate of the idea of conducting fortnightly raids against the continent but would find such ambitions greatly hamstrung by the convoluted command procedures through which even minor raids were authorised. Thus, as part of his suggestions for administrative reforms, Mountbatten proposed a 'more flexible procedure for planning and approving' minor raids and suggested retaining one Commando in readiness at Portsmouth with the necessary naval links already in place so that operations could be planned and mounted quickly having received only oral approval from the COS.[19] Such suggestions led to the establishment of the Small Scale Raiding Force as a means of swiftly undertaking minor raids with the minimum of bureaucratic red tape. Although the SSRF initially worked directly under CCO, its

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[16] Quoted in Lord Lovat, *March Past*, (Weidenfeld and Nicolson: London, 1979) p.223
[17] Mountbatten to COS Committee, 21 March 1942, CAB 80/35/57
[18] Mountbatten to Secretary, COS Committee, 23 July 1942, WO 106/4117
[19] Mountbatten to COS Committee, 9 May 1942, CAB 80/62/55

ability to conduct frequent operations was further enhanced when it was placed under the operational control of Admiral Hughes-Hallett's 'Force J' (a naval command formed after Dieppe to provide COHQ with a force capable of 'brigade sized lift'), a move which gave the SSRF access to a dedicated naval planning staff with a greater capacity to mount operations. Hughes-Hallett described this arrangement, stating:

> .... we hardly ever interfered with the military part of the plan. We did find it necessary however to go into considerable detail in connection with navigational problems, and escort and cover, and it was not in the least surprising that the Small-Scale Raiding Forces should have failed to achieve anything so long as they were entirely independent.[20]

Increasingly, however, the divergent requirements of SIS and SOE activities made the conduct of even minor raids from Britain once again problematic. There was mounting concern from these agencies that COHQ raids were making the insertion of agents and the gathering of clandestine intelligence, particularly on the lightly-defended Brittany coastlines, more difficult. Because the SSRF held a virtual monopoly over small-scale COHQ raiding in these areas, it was their activities which became a catalyst for debate over the relative priorities of raiding operations versus clandestine intelligence and sabotage activities.[21] The debate was extensive, but ultimately concluded in favour of SIS whose intelligence was deemed more valuable than that obtainable by the 'smash-and-grab' methods of SSRF. The COS therefore decreed that in the event of conflicts between SOE, SIS and COHQ, SIS would 'ordinarily be given priority', and appointed C-in-C Home Fleet to mediate over any further conflicts of interest between these different agencies.[22] SSRF activities were thus heavily curtailed and, with the Force's principle advantages subverted (notably the ease and frequency in which operations could be executed), the unit's *raison d'être* ceased to exist and it was ultimately disbanded.

As preparations for the invasion of France increased, even more stringent controls upon amphibious raiding operations from Britain were necessary lest they jeopardise or preclude essential reconnaissance; compromise invasion plans; or alter unfavourably the disposition of enemy forces and defences. Furthermore, as clandestine

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[20] Hughes-Hallett, Rear Admiral J., 'The Mounting of Raids', *Journal of RUSI*, Vol.XCV, No.580, (November 1950), p.587

[21] This occurred despite the fact that the original personnel of SSRF, formerly of Maid Honor Force, remained jointly administered by SOE and COHQ. CO SSRF to Mountbatten, 1 January 1943, DEFE 2/957

[22] Minutes of COS Committee meeting, 4 January 1943, DEFE 2/1093

reconnaissance operations by units such as the COPPs and S&Rs were increasingly coming to the fore, it was necessary to establish mechanisms by which their operations could be properly directed towards answering specific questions as posed by the supreme commander and his intelligence and planning staffs.[23] In October 1943, therefore, the COSSAC Raids and Reconnaissance Committee was established as the chief arbitrator of all raiding operations within COSSAC's sphere. Although the planning and mounting of raids would technically remain a COHQ responsibility, the Committee's role would be 'to allot priorities for and co-ordinate all such raids and to ensure that the best use was made of all means and resources available'.[24] This arrangement was both sensible and constructive and, at the suggestion of Admiral Ramsey, additional 'Reconnaissance Committees' were established on the staffs of other theatre commanders.[25]

The transition of the Commando role away from independent raiding activities and towards spearheading and protracted light-infantry tasks necessitated changes in the manner in which the Commandos were organised, administered and controlled. North Africa had highlighted many limitations with the Commando organisation, not least of all the restrictions of being reliant upon the UK-based SS Brigade for the administration of individual Commandos in the field. Before the invasion of Sicily, therefore, Brigadier Laycock established a subordinate SS Brigade HQ under AFHQ to act as a theatre-wide body to coordinate the assignment of the Commandos and deal with their administrative concerns. He also strove to alter the Commando establishment to ensure that each individual Commando possessed adequate 'transport and administration personnel for maintaining themselves in the field' lest they incur the charge of being 'parasites' constantly reliant on the patronage of neighbouring field formations.[26]

The creation of six more Royal Marine Commandos in August 1943 (joining the two already in existence) provided an even greater impetus for an effective command structure capable of orchestrating the deployments, and catering to the needs, of various Commandos potentially separated by large geographical distances. As the use of the SS Brigade HQ subdivision had worked well in Sicily it was decided, in October

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[23] G.E. Wildman-Lushington, COS to CCO to Secretary of the Admiralty (M Branch), 20 September 1943, DEFE 2/741; Dwyer (1993), p.41
[24] Minutes of Reconnaissance Committee, 6 November 1943, WO 106/4117
[25] Admiral Ramsay to Secretary of the Admiralty, 5 November 1943, ADM 1/13228
[26] Laycock, 'Reorganisation of SS Brigade', 1 April 1943, DEFE 2/1051

1943, to group all full-establishment 'regular' Commandos into four individual SS Brigades (each comprised four Commandos), and place all of these under a newly established SS Group in Britain headed by General Sturges, RM. This move would decentralise their administration and help alleviate the problems of reinforcement, logistics, and command and control which were becoming exacerbated by the increasingly large distances separating the individual Commandos.[27]

Attached to various divisional, corps, and army commands, in the field the SS Brigade organisation remained flexible. In France and northwest Europe the deployment of SS Brigades was relatively conventional; from D-Day +2 onwards the Commandos of the 1st and 4th SS Brigades under 21 Army Group deployed as complete units maintaining a similar relationship with their Brigade as that which a conventional Infantry Battalion would have with an Infantry Brigade.[28] For the 2nd SS Brigade in Italy and the Mediterranean and, to a lesser extent, the 4th SS Brigade in SEAC, however, cohesive deployments of Commandos directly under a Brigade were rarer. The 2nd SS Brigade's individual Commandos, in particular, were often separated from their Brigade HQ for protracted periods, working in subdivisions widely dispersed throughout Italy, the Balkans and Greece.[29] In such instances Brigade HQs would merely serve as a theatre-level administrative and advisory post on the best methods of deploying Commandos in an independent manner; individual Commandos were granted much more latitude retaining only loose links with the Brigade through the exchange of liaison officers etc..[30]

Overall, the SS Brigade structure can be viewed as highly successful. It was a flexible arrangement capable of adapting to both independent activities and more conventional mainline deployments. It helped mould the Commandos into the British order of battle for conventional operations; eased both the attachment of Commandos to field formations, and the attachment of supporting arms to the Commandos themselves; and helped the inter-service integration of Army and Royal Marine Commandos. As the war progressed the powers of the SS Brigade to train, plan for, and administer its individual Commandos would steadily increase, and by the closing stages of the war

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[27] Mountbatten to CIGS, 4 May 1943, WO 32/10416
[28] Major-General de Guingand, COS 21 Army Group to SHAEF, 7 June 1944, WO 205/136; Samain, p.44
[29] 21 Army Group Staff Study No.8 'Employment of Commandos and Rangers', 27 December 1943, RG 331, Entry 199, Box 32; Folder 322 Rangers
[30] 'History of the Commandos in the Mediterranean', DEFE 2/700, p.397

the 3rd Commando Brigade HQ (as the SS Brigades were renamed in December 1944) in India, for example, had developed auxiliary sections encompassing a 'Holding Commando', RM Engineer Commandos, Brigade Defence Sections, Medical Commandos, as well as quartermasters, provost marshals, workshops etc..[31] The SS Brigade served an important role in coordinating the actions of the Commandos, aiding their employment and catering for their logistical and administrative needs; yet most significantly, it performed an 'essential' role in advising higher commanders on the Commandos' 'employment and technique'.[32] Furthermore, the more conventional reorganisation, alongside the Commando successes in spearheading and assault roles, helped submerge much of the opposition and suspicion previously directed at them.[33]

Although in many regards there was a close commonality between the Commandos and the US Army Rangers, one of the most notable areas of divergence was in the manner in which the formations were administered and controlled; and it is fair to say that the Rangers suffered from the absence of a similar arrangement to that of COHQ and the SS Brigade. Throughout the war the Rangers lacked a formally constituted command structure which could give them legitimacy; provide high-level representation; advise higher commanders on their capabilities and tactics; set organisational and doctrinal precedents; and cater for their logistics and administration. During the war, all Ranger formations were directly attached to field formations, commonly at Divisional level or lower, and, with the possible exception of the 6th Rangers, there was no real effort to instruct higher bodies on Ranger capabilities or employment, nor was there any adequate apparatus for their administration. Consequently, the tasking and use of Ranger formations became solely dependent on the willingness of the higher headquarters, to which they were attached, to employ them.

In April 1943 prior to the invasion of Sicily, and following the creation of the 3rd and 4th Rangers, Darby had requested (almost simultaneously with the creation of the first nominal SS Brigade) that a Ranger Force Headquarters be authorised to provide for the 'direction of training and operations and for the purpose of facilitating administration of the three battalions'. Unlike the requests that Laycock had made, however, Darby's requests were rejected with the explanation that the Rangers were 'considered to be of

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[31] HQ SACSEA to GHQ India, 3 May 1945, WO 203/4594
[32] Laycock to Under Secretary of State, War Office, 10 October 1944, WO 32/10415
[33] Laycock to Brigadier Mills-Roberts, 28 March 1945, KCLMA Mills-Roberts Folder 3/17

a transient nature and to have no permanent place in army organisation'. The 'Ranger Force' that did deploy in Sicily was thus merely a cosmetic grouping with no separate headquarters, no special powers, and no formerly appointed commander (although Darby, CO 1st Rangers, was *de facto* commander of all three Battalions).[34] Following Sicily, there were further calls for the creation of a formal Ranger Force Headquarters and the acknowledgement of the battalions in a permanent organisation. Major Roy Murray, CO 4th Rangers, argued that such a Headquarters was essential and believed it should be 'patterned after the British Combined Operations staff, to handle the administrative problems, intelligence, long range planning, the allocation of assignments to the various battalions, and, most important, to decide if the assignment is a proper one for Rangers'.[35] Darby went as far as suggesting that: 'If ... it is the opinion of the War Department that battalions of this nature are not permanent, it is requested that these battalions be disbanded and reformed as a regularly approved organisation with a table of organisation already fully recognised by the War Department'.[36]

Lieutenant-General George S. Patton, Jr. was firmly behind the proposals of the Rangers, and 'in view of the excellent work performed by these units while under ... [his] command', he recommended that the battalions 'be consolidated into a Ranger Regiment, given suitable headquarters' under the command of Darby, and be permanently assigned to his Seventh Army for operations.[37] Despite such high-level support, General McNair, Army Ground Forces, remained adamant that these units were provisional expedients only and accordingly refused all such proposals. The only concession ultimately made was allowing the Rangers to establish a small provisional tactical headquarters for the invasion of Italy, and later, before Anzio, General Mark Clark promoted Darby to Colonel and allowed him to establish a temporary combined headquarters, called 6615th Ranger Force, Provisional.[38] In its brief existence, however, this grouping had no real authority aside from administration and tactical considerations, and in no way compared to a SS Brigade.[39] In May 1944, prior to the deployment of the 2nd and 5th Rangers in the Normandy landings another *ad hoc*

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[34] Darby to Eisenhower, 10 August 1943, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21066; Folder INBN-1-0
[35] Major Murray to General McNair, 28 November 1943, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21075; Folder INBN-4-0.1
[36] Darby to Eisenhower, 10 August 1943, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21066; Folder INBN-1-0
[37] Correspondence between Patton and Eisenhower, 12 August 1943, in *Ibid.*
[38] Correspondence between 'AWG' and Clark, 14 October 1943, in *Ibid.*
[39] Report of Action, 22 January 1944- 5 February 1944, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21067; Folder INBN-1-0.3

Provisional Ranger Group was established under Lieutenant-Colonel James E. Rudder (who outranked Major Max Schneider, his counterpart in the 5th Rangers), yet this too remained solely concerned with logistics and administration and ceased to operate shortly after D-Day.[40]

The refusal to grant the Rangers a permanent headquarters to formalise their command and control provides clear illustration of the dominant US perception of ranger formations as being ephemeral bodies for which there was little requirement once conventional arms had come into contact with the enemy. Although this overarching policy precedent would have notable implications for the 'correct' employment of the Rangers (as the next chapter will highlight), it did not, however, universally impede the development of effective command structures. The 6th Ranger Battalion's command arrangements are of particular note and, for two main reasons, would surpass those which had developed for the other Ranger Battalions in Europe. The first important difference between the 6th Rangers and the other Battalions were a result of the theatre-specific conditions of the war in the Southwest Pacific and the Philippines which promoted an inherent focus on the use of small groups and decentralised control.[41] The second, and more significant factor, was that that the 6th Rangers, like the Alamo Scouts, maintained a close and constructive relationship with the man ultimately responsible for their tasking: General Krueger, GOC Sixth Army. Having personally orchestrated the establishment of the 6th Rangers in the first instance, Krueger was unwavering in his support for them; something that helped guarantee the development of uncomplicated and effective command paths between his G-2 and G-3 infrastructure and Colonel Mucci's Rangers. Such a relationship was undoubtedly central to the 6th Ranger's success at Cabanatuan.[42]

As compared to the Army Rangers the command and control of both the FSSF and Merrill's Marauders was very conventional. The FSSF was organised into three nominal 'regiments' and a 'group HQ' under Colonel Frederick and was perpetually deployed, as a complete unit, via direct attachments at the divisional and corps level.[43] The Marauders were comparably structured, consisting of three 'battalions' and an HQ

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[40] 'A Narrative History of the Second Ranger Infantry Battalion, 1944', RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21072; Folder 23745, INBN-2-0.3, Ch.1, p.8
[41] Hogan, *US Army*, pp.90-91; 138
[42] Chae, Chelsea Y., 'The Roles and Missions of Rangers in the Twenty-First Century', Thesis, Fort Leavenworth: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1996, p.47
[43] Springer, pp.67; 123

and, in light of being the only US ground forces in the CBI theatre, had a uncomplicated chain of command operating directly under Stilwell's Northern Combat Area Command. Although both the Marauders and FSSF each had a composition and role largely foreign to conventional arms, their scale and organisation was, however, more familiar. Because both units were loosely based around the 'triangular' system as adopted by conventional US Army units, and because each unit possessed its own headquarters element, the command and control of the Marauders and FSSF, and their integration into operations involving field formations, was an inherently easier proposition than it was for many other specialist formations.[44] That is not to discount, however, a proportion of problems endemic to the use of these formations in an irregular manner. The rigours of the Marauder's long-range penetration activities, in particular, required the development of more unconventional procedures to cater for the employment of columns widely reliant on air supply and often separated from one another, and their HQ, by both distance and the limitations of communications.

Somewhat ironically, considering their early disbandment, it was the USMC Raiders that had perhaps the clearest command and control mechanisms of all US ranger formations. In their deployments against both Tulagi and Guadalcanal the 1st Raider Battalion fitted smoothly into the existing D-2 and D-3 infrastructure of the 1st Marine Division. The 2nd Raiders, by comparison, having conducted the Makin raid under the direction of Admiral Nimitz's Pacific Fleet, would maintain looser and more irregular command structures during their time on Guadalcanal. Of particular note are the command arrangements which were made for Carlson's 'long patrol' from Aloa Bay in November and December 1943. Although the operation was authorised and overseen by General Vandergrift, GOC 1st Marine Division, Carlson was granted a rare level of autonomy for its conduct. Although Carlson would maintain regular contact with the D-3 branch, forwarding situation and intelligence reports, and organising resupply missions etc., Vandergrift explicitly ordered that his staff should make no effort 'to give him [Carlson] anything whatever in the way of orders or instructions'.[45] As the success of this operation was in large part due to Carlson's irregular talents, credit must also fall upon the flexible and open-minded command and control system of the 1st Marine Division and its willingness to give Carlson the latitude through which his methods could be exploited.

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[44] Weigley (1967), p.463

[45] Twining, Merrill B., *No Bended Knee – The Battle for Guadalcanal*, (Ballantine: New York, 1996) pp.178-179

In March 1943, following Guadalcanal and the creation of two more Raider battalions the decision was taken, almost at the same time as Darby's proposals for the reorganisation of the Rangers were first rejected, to organise the heretofore independent Raider battalions into the First Marine Raider Regiment. In September 1943 the 2nd and 3rd Raiders were removed from this command and placed under a newly-created Second Regiment. Both organisations served to coordinate the administration, but not control, of the individual battalions. Their establishment would, however, mark the beginning of the end for the original raider concept as more orthodox officers came into the organisation and placed the battalions on a more conventional footing.[46] This step towards conventionalisation was a leap towards the ultimate disbandment of the Raiders; the removal of the likes of Carlson from the organisation (via promotion) providing 'a momentary glimpse of the dark side of the upper levels of the Marine Corps showing inflexibility of thought and a compulsive suspicion of all things new and untried'.[47]

As a whole, the deployment of commando and ranger formations in close conjunction with the main battle was effectively achieved and, aside from administrative and bureaucratic dilemmas, would cause relatively few problems during the war. The same, however, cannot be said for the command of control of special forces (or for commando formations deploying in an irregular manner). Operating in depth, highly individualistic, and with even more unfamiliar methods and equipment, the use and control of special forces was uniquely complicated. As nascent creations special forces offered largely unknown potentials, and initially the best manner by which to utilise these formations was to provide them with significant latitude to plan and conduct their own operations. Although leadership should not be confused with command and direction, during the formative period of a number of special forces the two were often symbiotic. The relationship between the 'errant captain' and the 'champion' so often defined the early mechanism for the command and control of these formations and inherently promoted informal procedures. Individual units would be given a loose mandate, timeframe, or area of operations, and then had the latitude to plan and conduct operations, within these restrictions, as they saw best. Such arrangements were often resented and helped to germinate the negative notion of the 'private army'.

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[46] Hoffman (1995)
[47] Twining, p.184

When Bagnold established the LRDG he immediately sought 'GHQ control' directly under Wavell.[48] Bagnold assumed that only by being responsible to the highest practicable authority in theatre would it be possible for his unit to be correctly deployed with their activities wedded into the broader operational and strategic picture.[49] Bagnold had set a precedent and thus when Stirling established 'L' Detachment he attained a similar arrangement with Auchinleck.[50] For much of their time in the desert both the LRDG and 'L' Detachment would work independently under GHQ MEF (with liaison officers attached to Western Desert Force/Eighth Army) with little formal organisation of command and control. Their administration and training was performed from within, and whilst the LRDG would conduct planning alongside the Director of Military Operations (DMO) so as to provide direction to their intelligence gathering activities, the SAS would be broadly responsible for its own planning.[51] Because of the unique conditions of the Desert War, the barren terrain; vast distances; open lines of communication; expansive flanks; and a strategy uncomplicated by inhabited areas, autonomous raiding was eminently possible and profitable, and the command arrangement of these special forces, as was admitted by Lieutenant-General R.L. McCreery, CGS MEF, 'may be untidy in principle but in practice it works'.[52]

From mid-1942, however, the proliferation of these units ensured that a tighter manner of command and control became necessary not only to protect them from competition and overlap, but also, more importantly, so as to not jeopardise, detract from, or impede conventional operations, lest 'plans of enormous moment [be] spoiled by the wild depredations of a handful of adventurers'.[53] The 'raiding circus' was getting out of hand, and the informal autonomous mechanisms of control began to falter. Moves were thus undertaken to formalise the command and administration of these special forces. It was thought desirable to provide one body with the authority to coordinate the activities of all the disparate groups. The first efforts to do this occurred in April 1942 when the LRDG was made responsible for the coordination of all activities 'behind the enemy's lines' in Libya which included, whilst in the field, all desert

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[48] Bagnold, p.125
[49] Hackett (1952), p.34
[50] Hoe, p.61
[51] Brigadier J.F.M. Whiteley, DDO to Eighth Army, 11 October 1941, WO 201/731
[52] CGS MEF document, 17 November 1942, WO 201/752
[53] Macksey (1985), p.165

special forces, as well as Middle East Commando, SOE, SIS and MI9 personnel. In practice, however, this move was soon found to be impracticable as it placed too much of a burden on the LRDG and threatened to reduce their operational efficiency.[54]

By August 1942, following extensive discussion with the relevant parties, it was decided to appoint an officer at GHQ MEF with the specific duty to coordinate the various desert special forces.[55] In addition, to further streamline this process, it was thought essential to amalgamate the 1st SBS, 'L' Detachment and the 1st SS Regiment (Middle East Commando) so as to increase co-operation and eliminate competition over resources and targets.[56] Although both Stirling and Lieutenant-Colonel John A. Graham, CO of 1st SS Regiment, sought control of this grouping, Graham had neither Stirling's flair for backdoor lobbying nor his social contacts and record of success with which to backup his plea. In characteristic style, Stirling's grab for expansion came off the back of a meeting with Winston Churchill,[57] to whom he wrote, the day after Graham's proposal was submitted, stating that not only should 'L' Detachment be enlarged, but that: 'Control to rest with the Officer Commanding 'L' Detachment and not with any outside body superimposed for purposes of co-ordination. .... The planning of operations to be carried out by 'L' Detachment to remain as hitherto the prerogative of 'L' Detachment'.[58] Although Stirling would win his point about expansion, when in late-September the 1st SS Regiment and SBS were incorporated into the 1st SAS Regiment, even he could not avert the need for a coordinating branch for all special forces in the theatre.[59]

In September 1942 a general staff branch under the DMO, GHQ MEF was established to coordinate the various desert special forces. This branch, known as G(Raiding Forces) [G(RF)] became the responsibility of Lieutenant-Colonel John 'Shan' Hackett whose roles were 'to rationalise the kaleidoscope of special forces without diminishing

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[54] 'LRDG's part in the 8th Army Operations, April 19th – May 26th', 7 June 1942, WO 201/813
[55] Minutes of GHQ MEF conference, 23 August 1942, WO 201/732
[56] Lieutenant-Colonel Graham to GHQ MEF, 8 August 1942, WO 201/732
[57] Stirling benefited greatly from allowing Winston Churchill's son Randolph to 'join' his unit on a raid on Benghazi following which Randolph dutifully recounted all to his father in a suitably embellished letter that reads like a *Boy's Own* novel. Thus when the Prime Minister visited the Middle East in August 1942 he invited both Stirling and Fitzroy Maclean (who as an MP Churchill was already acquainted) to dine with him, an event which, in the opinion of David Hoe, 'alone could be important to the long-term survival of the unit'. Hoe, p.148; Major Randolph S. Churchill to Winston Churchill, 24 June 1942, File 24 KCLMA Laycock
[58] David Stirling to the Prime Minister, 9 August 1942, WO 201/728
[59] General McCreery to General Alexander, September 1942, WO 201/732

the priceless individuality of the men in each'; to improve inter-army cooperation and make special operations more palatable to high command; and to ensure that individual unit commanders would not be able to harass army or theatre commanders without first going through him.[60] Before the G(RF) branch could become operational, however, the failure of a coordinated series of raids involving all special forces in the Middle East only served to highlight one of the foremost reasons for its creation. The failure, of 'Agreement' on Tobruk, in particular, proved that a complex operation could not be run by an array of disparate groups and highlighted the need for a 'properly constituted planning staff' of a limited number of select personnel. The flaws of 'Agreement', as well as the SAS attack on Benghazi ('Bigamy') and the SDF raid on Jalo ('Nicety'), lay not with the personnel involved, but instead, with limitations of organisation, planning, intelligence and, most clearly, the lack of security.[61] G(RF) thus began its existence with vivid illustration of its importance.

Historian John Gordon has claimed that the 'chief flaw of the desert special-operations venture' was the failure to devise controlling apparatus to 'keep pace with ... proliferation'. Whilst admitting that G(RF) was valuable, he postulated 'how much more effective it might have proved had it been expanded into something more substantial – a "Joint Desert Special Operations Command".'[62] Such a move, however, was neither practicable nor strictly necessary in the unique conditions of the theatre which, for the most part, welcomed autonomy and freedom of action. If there was a flaw in command, it was not the absence of a complex controlling body, for ultimately G(RF) was more than adequate in catering for the unique single-service special operations as occurring in theatre, but was in the late development of any controlling apparatus. Had G(RF) been created earlier it would have helped ensure the best possible application of special forces, may have prevented some of the wilder schemes (not least such debacles as 'Agreement'), and have led to a better organised and more cost-effective use of personnel and resources.

Despite the increasing requirement for coordination of planning, administration, and tasking of special forces it remained important to still provide them with a degree of

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[60] Hackett in foreword to Messenger, Charles; Young, George and Rose, Stephen, *The Middle East Commandos*, (William Kimber: Northamptonshire, 1988) p.9; GHQ MEF to Hackett, 28 September 1942, WO 201/743; Fullick, Roy, *Shan Hackett*, (Leo Cooper: Barnsley, 2003) pp.57-62
[61] 'Operation – AGREEMENT, Lessons from the Military Aspect', undated, WO 201/745; Lessons of 'Bigamy' and 'Nicety', October 1942, WO 201/748
[62] Gordon, pp.187-188

independence, flexibility and latitude in both planning and mounting operations. Much was gained by assigning units broad areas of operations in which they could have a virtually free hand, particularly in harassment and 'alarm and despondency' operations. As Churchill asserted: 'If you want to use the inventiveness and audacity of the people who are best adapted for the job ... you must give a good deal of latitude lower down in how they operate'.[63] The G(RF) system was effective not least of all because Hackett, something of a kindred soul to the 'errant captains' under his charge, had a sound understanding of their roles and tactics. Under G(RF) the individual units remained independent of one another and Hackett was 'reluctant to try to impose too much control', understanding that in the field 'faced by situations that changed rapidly, the special-force commander on the spot sometimes seemed the individual best qualified to make decisions about what targets to hit'.[64]

The Desert War proved that so long as their area of operation is clearly defined and broad controls are placed on their deployments, granting special forces freedom of action and autonomy within a given area could certainly be very effective. The opportunities for such an approach were, however, particular to the unique conditions of the Desert War and, as a rule, the more complex or important the issues at hand, the less potential there was for autonomous activities by special forces. Should real estate become limited then controls on these units became essential; if for no other reason than to prevent them from being a nuisance and attempting to coerce higher commanders into accepting missions of dubious worth and of limited operational value. Because of the many and complex variables effecting deployment of special forces in depth in other theatres: conventional offensives; politics; partisans; the necessity for security and deception; limited availability of transport or support resources etc., the employment of special forces increasingly required more co-ordination and control in both planning and execution, not just for tidiness and efficiency, but for the most successful prosecution of Allied strategy.

G(RF) set a precedent for an effective method of controlling special forces, but became redundant soon after its creation as special operations were curtailed following the advances of Eighth Army and operation 'Torch'. With an eye to future deployments, on 8 March 1943, Lieutenant-Colonel H.J. Cator was appointed to command a new

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[63] Churchill Vol.II, p.413
[64] Gordon, p.156

GHQ ME sub-division, 'Headquarters Raiding Forces', which would absorb the G(RF) branch in a move to 'centralise and improve' the administration, reinforcement, logistics and discipline of its special forces.[65] This organisation, however, was short-lived and was broken up by the separation of the units under its charge for differing deployments in the Eastern and Western Mediterranean. In September 1943, this branch's lineal, but not direct descendent, 'Raiding Forces HQ Aegean' was created under Brigadier D.J.T. Turnbull. Responsible to GHQ ME, this branch was to maintain the same relationship with its varied special forces that an infantry brigade HQ maintained with an infantry battalion.[66]

Raiding Forces Aegean, however, suffered some notable teething problems. The LRDG in particular were not impressed by its activities and resented having to be reliant upon them for logistics and intelligence. Lloyd Owen believed that 'inexperience and a lack of knowledge' led to Raiding Forces not appreciating the 'intricate and careful planning that is essential for success of LRDG patrols'.[67] This was exacerbated by the fact that Turnbull, by all accounts no John Hackett, was personally inexperienced knowing 'nothing about any form of special work'. The situation was only partially resolved by the appointment of Lieutenant-Colonel Prendergast, formerly in command of LRDG, as Turnbull's second-in-command.[68] Although the wider direction of the Aegean 'folly' was not the fault of Raiding Forces, nor the units therein, the branch did little, in the earlier stages, either to promote suitable, or prevent inappropriate, deployment of the formations under its charge. Early raids in the Aegean were plagued by the very problems that Raiding Forces HQ had been established to prevent. Operations were 'poorly coordinated, without central planning' with the individual special forces generally operating independently of one another with much '"overlapping, wastage, and friction".'[69] Gradually, however, this branch grew more successful and, as broader ambitions in the Aegean were curtailed, the personnel of Raiding Forces were increasingly used as intended.

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[65] GHQ ME directive to Lieutenant-Colonel Cator, 8 March 1943, WO 201/2202
[66] 'Raiding Forces Aegean' was comprised, at different stages, of the LRDG, SBS [Squadron], RSR, Raiding Forces Holding Unit, elements of No.30 Commando, RMBPD, the Levant Schooner Flotilla, the Greek Sacred Squadron, and the 'Kalpaks'. See: 'Composition, organisation and system of command and administration of raiding forces', 11 November 1943, WO 204/10242
[67] Report by CO LRDG, 24 November 1943, IWM Lloyd-Owen, PP/MCR/C13, Reel 2
[68] Owen, David Lloyd, Pro*vidence Their Guide*, (Pen & Sword: Barnsley, 2003) p.138
[69] Gooderson, Ian, 'Shoestring Strategy: The British Campaign in the Aegean, 1943', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.25, No.3 September 2002, pp.1-36, p.10

Although US ranger-style formations were hindered by the absence of a direct equivalent to either COHQ or the SS Brigade, many US special forces benefited greatly from William Donovan and the OSS as an organisation dedicated to their interests. OSS provided a centralised unifying body for American special operations which, in terms of administering and directing disparate special forces on a global scale, certainly had the potential to be a more efficient arrangement than the cumbersome multi-agency approach of the British. As early as May 1942 Donovan clearly understood the need for a centralised approach to irregular activities, a COI Memorandum stated:

> .... decentralisation into isolated groups engaged on independent and unrelated missions is improper. A definite command in the military forces should be created to plan and conduct this type of warfare through the war. Without such centralised planning and control, the full possibilities of sabotage and guerrilla warfare cannot be utilised.[70]

In the processes of developing American special forces capabilities OSS bears more similarities to COHQ than it does to their more obvious counterparts of SIS and SOE. The fierce opposition that Donovan faced in June 1941 as COI, particularly over his proposals for special operations, or 'supplementary activities', was certainly analogous to that which Keyes first faced as DCO.[71] Nor was the opposition solely limited to Washington. Suspicion and animosities precluded OSS development in both the Pacific and Far Eastern theatres. The starkest opposition came from General MacArthur who saw OSS requests to operate in his theatre to be 'an outrageous infringement upon his own territory'.[72] Although not adverse to special operations, as exhibited by his sponsorship of the Philippine guerrillas, AIB, the Alamo Scouts, and the 6th Ranger Battalion, MacArthur was reluctant to cede control to what he saw as a suspicious external agency with dubious political motives and accordingly barred all OSS elements from the South West Pacific theatre.[73] OSS operations in the Central Pacific were also heavily curtailed with Admiral Nimitz limiting participation to only MU and R&D Branches. This move was, however, based more on the lack of requirement and opportunity than it was from any particular animosity.[74]

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[70] COI Memorandum to War Department, May 1942, RG 226, Entry 136, Box 140; Folder 1464
[71] Casey, p.5; Harris Smith, p.2
[72] Yu, p.13
[73] Hogan, David W., Jr., 'MacArthur, Stilwell, and Special Operations in the War Against Japan', *Parameters*, (Spring 1995), pp.104-105; Breuer, pp.33-34; Manchester, William, *American Caesar – Douglas MacArthur*, (Dell: New York, 1978) p.439
[74] History of the OSS MU, RG 226, Entry 99, Box 98; Folder 4, p.146

Similarly at odds with OSS was General Stilwell. Fundamentally an orthodox soldier, he was 'fervently prejudiced against "irregular" military activity' and disparaged 'guerrilla tactics as "illegal action" and "shadow boxing".'[75] Although willing to grant Commander Milton Miles's Naval Group China (later called SACO) 'free and exclusive control over special operations in CBI', Stilwell was initially unwilling to award the same access to OSS Detachment 101. Naval Group China 'enjoyed virtual autonomy as far as any American military authority in Asia was concerned, both because of Tai Li's [head of the Chinese intelligence service as recognised by the Chungking government] directorship and because the Navy Department in Washington fully supported Miles' position'. For operations in China OSS had no choice but to accept Miles as a nominal regional head.[76] Detachment 101 was ultimately confined to Burma and maintained very little contact with SACO. This separation was not, however, a result of any inter-service divisions or animosities, for when first meeting Miles, Major Carl F. Eifler (commanding Detachment 101) claimed they 'hit it off from the moment we met', and the pair came to a mutual agreement that 'we could work a lot better and accomplish more if we worked together but gave the opinion to the outside world that we disliked each other'. The separation was fundamentally a political move made for the benefit of the Chinese who were suspicious of Eifler's associations with British agencies that they considered untrustworthy. [77]

With any conflict with the Chinese averted, Stilwell ultimately embraced Detachment 101 in Burma and gave them a 'free hand' to operate independently; sending Eifler into the jungle with the mandate that all he wanted to hear from them were 'Booms'.[78] Detachment 101 thus established a main base station at Nazira in the Assam from which its operations in the field were directed. This centralised command system worked well, but with 101's dramatic expansion to cater for Stilwell's Burma Road offensive it began to become overstretched. It was thus deemed necessary to develop an 'Area Control' system by which northern Burma was divided into four regions, each under an individual commander responsible for all subsidiary 101 activities within his area. This was an effective method of dealing with the complications of expansion; it

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[75] Harris Smith, p.244; Hogan, 'MacArthur, Stilwell', p.106

[76] OSS reasserted its independence in China in early-1944 with the establishment of Detachment 202 which was administratively independent of SACO. Roosevelt Vol.II, pp.361-363; Hogan (1995), p.106; Yu, pp.52-53

[77] Eifler to Donovan, 24 November 1942, RG 226, Entry 99, Box 65; Folder 3

[78] *Ibid.*

removed the burden from Nazira and greatly improved communications and logistical arrangements; its rewards, as Colonel Peers, Detachment 101's CO, stated, 'were initiative and flexibility such as we had never known.'[79]

Within Europe, no doubt affected by the British influence, attitudes towards OSS were significantly more mellowed. The first overseas COI branch in London was small, 'characterised by informality' and had no 'elaborate chain of command'.[80] By the summer of 1942, however, with the creation of OSS 'the presence of such an independent quasi-civilian agency, conducting highly operational activities' was becoming 'incompatible with the rigid organisational pattern' rapidly enveloping the theatre. To alleviate these tensions and promote more efficient operational mechanisms, in February 1943, OSS/London sought to be incorporated into the Theatre framework via 'militarisation', a process granted on 4 June 1943 when OSS/London was officially recognised as a military detachment and made responsible to the Assistant-COS, G-2 ETOUSA.[81] Such a move, mirrored in other theatres, provided OSS with a Table of Organisation and Equipment and an allotment for the recruitment and promotion of personnel etc.. This reorganisation was not, however, a panacea for OSS inexperience and in many of its first operational deployments the initial position of OSS was 'inevitably that of a new agency about whose functions and relative position neither its own members, nor those to whom it was immediately responsible were sure'.[82]

The OGs were awarded branch status in May 1943 which authorised personnel to be dispatched to the field. When deployed to a theatre the OGs would operate under their own 'Area Staff' that was responsible for controlling 'all Groups operating within and from the Theatre', this staff, however, remained subservient to the larger SO (Special Operations) Branch headquarters for all matters of planning, administration, tasking and direction.[83] Soon after the OGs first took to the field, however, this arrangement was deemed undesirable. The 'general character and duties' of the OGs were so divergent from the rest of OSS that many OGs 'felt they had little in common' with the

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[79] Peers and Brelis, pp.117-118
[80] Roosevelt Vol.II, p.143
[81] *Ibid.*, pp.6-7
[82] *Ibid.*, p.65
[83] Colonel Ellery C. Huntington, Jr. OC OGs to Lieutenant-Commander R. Davis Halliwell, Chief SO, 22 June 1943, RG 226, Entry 136, Box 140; Folder 1460; SOE document, 'Employment of OGs in the ETO and Procedure for their Dispatch', 6 June 1944, HS 8/288

larger organisation.[84] Furthermore there was a genuine concern that the SO branch did not sufficiently understand the qualifications or mandate of the OGs.[85] Lieutenant-Colonel Russell Livermore, commanding the first operationally deployed OGs in Corsica, highlighted the need for

> ... a good tough guy with some rank as head of OG who is not afraid to yell bloody murder and protect our rear in matters of allotment, etc. .... Having much trouble here with command and administrative channels within OSS, it being a crazy civilian agency. I hope to get OG reorganised in this theatre as a regular military regiment with a different name and under OSS command only at the very top.[86]

On the basis of such justifications, on 21 June 1944 the various OGs in the Italian and Mediterranean theatre were placed on a more military footing and renamed Companies 'A' (Italian), 'B' (French), and 'C' (Yugoslav and Greek) of the 2671st Special Reconnaissance Battalion Separate (Provisional). It was a move undertaken for a variety of reasons: to improve the planning and application of the OGs; to make their use more palatable to the military high command and remove suspicion over their utility; to ease the attachment of groups to higher formations for operational control; and rather naïvely, it was hoped that it would help protect OG personnel from Hitler's Commando Order. The gradual OG separation from the SO Branch was completed in November 1944 with the creation of the 'OG Command' under Livermore which represented a separate 'military unit' of OSS responsible directly to Donovan.[87] These moves towards independence for the OGs increased the potential for their employment, giving them greater powers and more efficient structures for the conduct of operations. The effectiveness of these measures is well illustrated by the extensive and widespread deployment of OGs from the summer of 1944 onwards.

The gradual rise of resistance activities and the increasing deployments of SOE, OSS and varied special forces in the Mediterranean theatre increasingly highlighted the importance of co-ordinating the activities of all Allied irregular elements working 'behind enemy lines' under one clear banner to improve their administration and tasking. By February 1944 the volume of work that these varied elements were

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[84] Major A. Peter Dewey, 'OG History', 13 June 1945, RG 226, Entry 99, Box 98; Folder 5, pp.35-36
[85] History of 'Italian' OGs, RG 226, Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 146, p.13
[86] Livermore to Lanier, 12 June 1944, RG 226, Entry 99, Box 34; Folder 7
[87] Donovan, 'Activation of OG Command', 27 November 1944, RG 226, Entry 136, Box 140; Folder 1460

generating 'had increased to such an extent and had become interwoven with such high level policy decisions' that it was necessary to establish several regional staff branches to specifically coordinate the conduct of 'special operations' (defined as those 'military operations within or behind enemy lines').[88] These were: Special Operations G-3 Algiers (AFHQ) for co-ordinating operations on the Western Mediterranean and the South of France; Special Operations G-3 15 Army Group for operations in support of AAI; and Force 266 for operations in Yugoslavia and Albania.[89]

In April 1944 'Special Operations: Mediterranean' [SOM] was established under Major-General W.A.M. Stawell to co-ordinate these three separate branches, and the forces within their respective areas of operation, under one head; prepare plans and initiate these for command approval; advise AFHQ on the capabilities and availabilities of these forces; coordinate such activities with commanders of lower echelons; and allot priorities for use of air and naval craft.[90] Stawell would be the 'technical adviser to SAC [General Wilson] on special operations' and act as 'commander of such SOE/OSS units as are not assigned to subordinate commands, and controller of all special operations and SOE/OSS activities in the Mediterranean'.[91] Although SOM was a joint Anglo-American branch, OSS remained somewhat separate, retaining an independent headquarters, headed by Colonel Ed Glavin, under AFHQ. Whilst this alternative channel did not cause significant complications for the deployment of the OGs and MUs it did remain an extra bureaucratic hurdle for coordination with wider OSS activities.[92]

Command arrangements had to adapt swiftly to alterations in the strategic situation and did so dramatically in mid-1944. The stepping up of activities in the Balkans necessitated the creation of the Balkan Air Force (BAF) in June 1944 with responsibility over all trans-Adriatic operations. With this move, Force 266 was disbanded and the forces previously under its charge (including Commandos, LRDG, OGs and RSR) became the responsibility of the Land Forces Adriatic (LFA) sub-

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[88] AFHQ Algiers to War Office, 30 April 1944, WO 193/620
[89] AFHQ History of Special Operations: Mediterranean Theatre, WO 204/10392
[90] *Ibid.*; AFHQ Memorandum, 'Functions of G-3, Special Operations', 8 February 1944, AIR 51/105
[91] 'Channels of command for special operations and SOE/OSS activities in the Mediterranean Theatre', April 1944, WO 193/620
[92] AFHQ instructions to Major-General Stawell, 14 April 1944, WO 204/10392; Beevor, J.G., *SOE Recollections and Reflections*, (The Bodley Head: London, 1981) p.85

division of BAF headed by Brigadier Davy (who was familiar to many special forces having previously been DMO GHQ MEF during the Desert War).[93]

By far the most important changes occurred, however, in preparation for the invasion of France, where the magnitude of the events at hand necessitated concerted efforts to centralise the control of the special forces that would be used in support of the invasions. In spite of the importance of the theatre, mechanisms for the co-ordinated control of special forces and resistance formations in France were established relatively late in the day. It was not until May 1944 when the inter-allied branches of Special Forces Headquarters (SFHQ) in London and the Special Projects and Operations Centre (SPOC) in Algiers (formerly the AFHQ-controlled G-3 Special Operations branch) were established under SHAEF. These organisations would coordinate the planning, dispatch, administration and control of SOE/OSS agents and their Jedburgh and OG special forces in the North and South of France, respectively, and most importantly, would advise the Supreme Commander about the capabilities of both these units and the Resistance, and provide him with a means of employing them for best effect.

From July 1944, however, the command and control of the Jedburghs and OGs became more complex as the direction of the Resistance, SFHQ, and SPOC ceased to be the direct responsibility of SHAEF and was placed under *Etat-major des Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur* (EMFFI) commanded by General Koenig.[94] Although this transition in command was not fully implemented until mid-August, the timing of the reshuffle created some significant disruption and many bureaucratic headaches. Macksey has claimed that:

> The unevenness of clandestine performance [in France] must largely be laid at the door of the Allied Higher Command .... Had [EMFFI command] been implemented when FFI was formed in March all might have been well, since the new headquarters would have had time in which to shake down after being pitched into action.[95]

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[93] LFA Commander's Report, May 1945, WO 204/10429; p.5
[94] Foot (1966), p.xxii in Introduction
[95] Macksey, Kenneth, *The Partisans of Europe in World War II*, (Hart-Davis: London, 1975) p.192

Instead, experienced staff officers from SOE and OSS faced notable problems working in a foreign bureaucracy with inexperienced French officers.[96] Although a historical study by Lewis has discounted the damage caused by this transition claiming that it was 'largely a political and cosmetic measure, because Koenig's deputies from SOE and OSS maintained the mechanisms of command, communication, and supply'; its timing was, nevertheless, ill-thought out and 'counter-productive, causing disruption and confusion at a critical time'.[97]

A further source of difficulties affecting the command and control of the Jedburghs and OGs in France stemmed from the unevenness of relations between SPOC and SFHQ. Whilst those OGs that operated from SPOC benefited from an existent and 'splendid' staff (formerly Special Operations G-3, Algiers) experienced in OG operations that 'properly understood the manipulation of the OG as a weapon', those OGs under SFHQ, on the other hand, were hindered by the absence of proper OG infrastructure and were forced to rely on planning and administrative staffs that had little 'proper understanding of the function' of the OGs. This situation amongst the OGs in Britain was subsequently aggravated when their CO Lieutenant-Colonel Serge Obolensky, an officer well experienced in OG work, accompanied his men into the field leaving 'the administration of his groups in France to SO'.[98] Whilst the OGs worked better from SPOC than SFHQ, the reverse seems applicable to the Jedburgh teams, whose entire infrastructure began, and largely remained in Britain. Teams were only sent to Algiers in April, and SPOC was unable to develop a proper staff to deal with their coordination and dispatch. As one Jedburgh reported, the 'greatest mistake' of SPOC was

> .... the lack of one head. Duplicity or even triplicity of command ... leads only to confusion and lack of clear directives. .... The lack of an administrative officer to look after the Jeds in the field was a big mistake. The Jed officer cannot be expected to do briefing, resupply, and field telegrams, as well as administration.[99]

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[96] Funk, Arthur Layton, *Hidden Ally: The French Resistance, Special Operations, and the landings in Southern France, 1944*, (Greenwood: London, 1992) p.74
[97] Lewis, S.J., *Jedburgh Team Operations in Support of 12th Army Group, August 1944*, (Fort Leavenworth: Kansas, 1991); Ford, Roger, *Steel from the Sky – The Jedburgh Raiders*, (Cassell: London, 2004) pp.29-30
[98] 'OG History' by Major A. Peter Dewey, 13 June 1945, RG 226, Entry 99, Box 98; Folder 5
[99] Major H.N. Marten, 'Report on Jedburghs (Zone Sud)', 6 October 1944, RG 226, Entry 154, Box 56; Folder 945

Such confused command arrangements risked leading to misunderstanding and confusion between the Jedburghs and OGs in the field and, on occasions, led to potentially dangerous situations as occurred on 8 June when Jedburgh team 'Quinine' arrived at the same drop zone as OG 'Emily' without any prior warning and with neither group having knowledge of the other's mission or intentions.[100] It could also lead to a degree of resentment between groups because of the differing procedures of allotting supplies and aircraft priorities. Jedburgh team 'Willys', for example, was aggrieved that OGs 'Louise' and 'Betsy', with whom it worked closely, 'seemed to receive everything they requested from Algiers almost as soon as the ink was dry on the signals pad' while they 'had to wait, sometimes for weeks, for scraps'.[101]

The problems with the command and control of the SOE/OSS units were exacerbated by the separation of the SAS Brigade from the SFHQ and SPOC infrastructure. Upon its creation the SAS Brigade came under the control of I Airborne Corps, because 'neither 21 Army Group nor SHAEF ... were prepared to take the SAS under direct command, and in fact Airborne was the only Headquarters with the transport, knowledge, and experience for the job'.[102] Under Airborne HQ, however, the SAS Brigade were able to retain a great deal of independence, receiving direct guidance from SHAEF and undertaking most of their own planning, intelligence analysis, and operational command and control. The Brigade was, however, 'on the horns of a bureaucratic dilemma', and the lack of clear links with SFHQ was certainly an issue (the absence of links with SPOC was of less significance as the SAS did not deploy extensively in the South of France). SAS Brigade independence led SFHQ to perceive the SAS as 'a potential usurper and drain on scarce resources' rather than as an organisation with complementary aims and methods to their own.[103]

Such mutual suspicion and antagonism prevented the establishment of a joint SAS-SFHQ committee and, aside from the permanent attachment of an SAS staff officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Ian Collins, to SFHQ to help plan the SAS role in 'strategical resistance' operations, there was no direct communication between SFHQ and SAS Brigade.[104] In light of a reliance upon improvised and informal command

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[100] Brown, Arthur, *Some notes on Jedburgh 'Quinine'*, (Unpublished memoir) p.3 in IWM Brown 03/24/1
[101] Ford (2004), p.153
[102] Warner (1986), p.145
[103] Kiras, James D., *Special Operations and Strategy*, (Routledge: New York, 2006) pp.110-111
[104] HQ Airborne Troops to Commander SAS Troops, 4 June 1944, IIS 6/604

arrangements, relations between the SAS, the OGs and the Jedburghs were prone to be marred by confusion in planning, duplication of effort, and competition for aircraft sorties and supplies; factors which all were to the detriment of their effective tasking.[105] Whilst in the field, these command and control problems could lead to practical difficulties resulting from different signal procedures, supply arrangements, and aircraft allotments etc..[106]

The convoluted manner via which irregular elements and the Resistance formations were controlled in France also led to problems in synchronising their activities with the operations of field formations. Military formations in the field were only able to communicate with, and receive reports from, the Jedburghs and OGs via SFHQ or SPOC and though 'Special Forces Detachments' which were placed in Army and Army Group headquarters and with field formations. But the SF Detachments themselves, and ergo the field formations, had no direct means of communicating with Jedburghs and organised partisan groups without first going through the overstretched SFHQ and SPOC networks that were plagued with problems with both the quality of communication and the sheer quantity needing to be analysed.[107] The result of this inadequate system ensured that in France much of the Allied officer corps, 'particularly at the senior levels ... remained unaware of the capabilities of SOF teams beyond postlinkup tactical assistance.'[108] In light of the nascent nature of special operations in depth, the magnitude of operations occurring, and the complicated problems of joint and combined operations, such problems would have been hard to avoid entirely, but their effects could have been significantly lessened had a unified command system that was properly wedded into the strategic decision making process existed.

The pattern, visible from 1943 onwards, which saw heretofore autonomous special forces become increasingly centralised under dedicated command branches is equally apparent amongst the varied maritime special forces. In the wake of the rampant proliferation of these units each under COHQ, Mountbatten would, in June 1943, call for the centralisation of each of these groups under a single coordinating authority. He believed such a move to be essential so as to 'avoid overlapping and duplication of

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[105] Ford (2003) p.32; Ford (2004) p.106; Funk (1992), p.74; OSS/London War Diaries, Vol.2 Planning, KCLMA MF 204
[106] Wing Commander R. Hockey, 'Notes on SAS Operations', 11 June 1944, AIR 20/8945
[107] 'Jedburgh Team Chronologies', RG 226, Entry 190, Box 740; Folder 1462
[108] Lewis, S.J., (1991)

function' and lead to 'a simplification and standardisation of training'.[109] This arrangement would also remove the burden of administration from small operational units; a move welcomed by the likes of Lieutenant-Commander Willmott, CO COPP Depot, for example, who had already complained that 'successive storms from on high ...[were] increasingly hard and wearing to resist' and had requested that he could 'dissociate myself entirely from questions of equipment and facilities'.[110] By July 1943 Mountbatten's proposals had been formalised and 'HMS Rodent', the 'Small Boat Unit' (SBU), was created to centralise the administration (if not the training or operational control) of the many disparate maritime special forces.[111]

The SBU also fulfilled an important role in serving as an educator, informing and instructing higher commands, via COHQ, in the functions and availability of its units. For instance, before Sicily the COPPs had been under-utilised by Naval Authorities not 'properly aware of their function and purpose'. Yet by October 1943, their roles were 'generally understood and appreciated' with SBU helping to make it 'clear that these units are not a clandestine free-lance party sent out by the Admiralty, but a section of the Naval Forces with a definite function and duty to perform in preparation for the Assault'.[112] Despite its varied benefits, by mid-1944 the declining requirements for special maritime operations from Britain would ensure that the SBU became largely redundant, and in August it was subsequently disbanded. Running concomitant with the SBU in Britain was the Admiralty's DDOD(I) branch. Created in May 1943, this branch sought to co-ordinate the Royal Navy's irregular shipping needs (primarily agent transport) from Britain and the Mediterranean. At various stages SBU formations had contact with DDOD(I) operations and, with the decline of SBU's responsibilities, DDOD(I) would lobby for the transfer of various SBU naval units to its command; ultimately succeeding in gaining control of both the RMBPD and SOE's maritime assets.[113]

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[109] Mountbatten to Admiralty, 21 June 1943, ADM 116/5112
[110] Willmott to COHQ, February 1943, DEFE 2/1111
[111] SBU would administer the *LCOCUs*, RMBPD, SBS, COPPs, COSU, SRU, and No.30 (Assault) Commando.
[112] COHQ Docket, 'Liaison between COPP Units and C-in-C's and Force Commanders', 11 October 1943, ADM 1/13228
[113] DDOD(I) paper, 'Transfer of unorthodox offensive units to the control of DDOD(I)', 30 July 1944, ADM 1/16957; Office of Allied Naval Commander to SHAEF, 2 February 1944, RG 226, Entry 148, Box 83; Folder 1200

Before the SBU was disbanded, however, many of its chargés had been sent to the Far East as a result of Mountbatten's call for '*his* boys' to join him in his new appointment as SACSEA.[114] Following the arrival of these units Mountbatten established the 'Small Operations Group' (SOG) to co-ordinate their activities.[115] In its creation Mountbatten's motivations were much the same as they were in 1943 with the creation of the SBU: he considered such a group essential to avoid confusion; to reduce the number of independent organisations with which higher commanders had to deal; to 'simplify administration and provide a common base'; and to 'ensure that as far as possible training and equipment of parties were standardised and that all units benefited from the experience gained in operations and training.'[116] Furthermore, like SBU, SOG would be extremely important in leading to an 'increased appreciation' amongst higher commands as to the roles of the formations under its charge.[117]

SOG was an Admiralty dominated organisation: commanded by two Royal Marine Officers, Colonel H.T. Tollemache and Lieutenant-Colonel Hasler, and operating under the overall control of C-in-C Eastern Fleet. As such, the Army personnel of the SBS were concerned about the lack of a 'friend at court' and feared being 'discarded' under this regime.[118] As experienced units they, and a proportion of COPPs, were also 'inclined to be a little scornful' of the new SOG organisation. Particularly distasteful were suggestions that the experienced SBS and COPP training staffs in Britain be disbanded, and that SOG be solely responsible for the training of all new recruits for these formations, a move, the SBS argued, would be to the clear detriment of the overall quality of their units.[119] Although such concerns were alleviated, in part, by the transfer of essential personnel from Britain to join the SOG training sections, they did, however, prompt Major Courtney's 'Z' SBS (the closest maritime formation to a 'private army') to shun SOG entirely and instead seek employment directly under Force 136.[120] In operational deployments SOG was flexible, capable of attaching its

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[114] Parker (1998), p.127; Clifford, Kenneth J., *Amphibious Warfare development in Britain and America*, (Edgewood: New York, 1983) p.217

[115] Ultimately comprising the COPPs, SBS, SRU and RM Detachment 385.

[116] Record of SOG, March 1946, DEFE 2/1747; Minutes of SEAC meeting on formation of SOG, 3 February 1944, WO 203/131

[117] CCO to Secretary of the Admiralty, 28 February 1945, DEFE 2/1203

[118] DCO, 'Notes on SBS', March 1944, DEFE 2/1036

[119] CCO to Major-General G.E. Wildman-Lushington, Advance HQ, SEAC, 22 May 1944, DEFE 2/1203

[120] This was in line with 'Z' SBS's earlier deployments in the Mediterranean which saw the unit avoid SBU and work directly under submarine flotillas in Malta and for Special Operations G-3, Algiers 'as a private army ... and not as part of any larger organisation'. Note on 'SOG and SBS',

units to corps or divisional jurisdiction (commonly under XV Corps in the Arakan), but also remaining capable of planning and mounting independent operations of its own creation, or those devised directly by Mountbatten or C-in-C Far Eastern Fleet.[121]

The activities of SOG, alongside Force 136, OSS, SIS, and V-Force in SEAC were all coordinated, in a manner analogous to the SOM organisation, by the theatre-wide 'P Division' headed by Captain Garnons-Williams, RN. Established in December 1943 'P' Division would coordinate and approve plans for all 'British and American quasi-military organisations and irregular forces' within Mountbatten's command.[122] The command arrangements of SOG and 'P Division' are together illustrative of how the methods of administering and controlling disparate special forces had evolved towards the end of the war. They were uncomplicated and dedicated command branches, directly responsible to the highest practicable authorities. By centralising and coordinating the planning, administration and deployments of special forces, they helped to ensure their most efficient application, as well as help avoid the risks of compromise, duplication of effort, and competition etc.. Furthermore, these organisations played a vital role in making other commands aware of the capabilities and existence of specialist formations and helped reduce much of the animosity directed towards them. At the same time, however, they also remained broadly flexible, giving enough latitude to their subordinate formations so as to not stifle initiative or sacrifice the *esprit de corps* of the individual units.

The all-embracing nature of the OSS MU Branch subverted much of the need for the US to develop similar command arrangements as to the British SBU and SOG; it was an inherently sound and efficiently organised structure for the training, supply and dispatch of special maritime personnel on a global scale. Furthermore, the MU's OSS Branch status, like that of the OGs, further streamlined the manner via which its operational parties could be attached to other commands (such as G-3 Special Operations, 15 Army Group in Italy, or Detachments 101 and 404 in the Far East) for deployment.[123] In the Mediterranean non-OSS US maritime special forces were

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April 1944, DEFE 2/1036; Major G.B. Courtney, CO 'Z' SBS to CCO, 26 April 1944, DEFE 2/1203

[121] CCO brief on Special Parties in SEAC, October 1944, DEFE 2/1035; Colonel Tollemache, SOG Bulletin No.1, 31 July 1945, DEFE 2/1203; Record of SOG, March 1946, DEFE 2/1747

[122] SACSEA Directive, 18 December 1943, RG 226, Entry 92, Box 491; Folder 15

[123] Captain Alfred M. Lichtman, MU Area Operations Officer to Lieutenant William H. Pendelton, Chief, MU NATO, 12 April 1944, RG 226, Entry 143, Box 5; Folder 77

integrated into a 'Special Operations' sub-section of the War Plans Section of the US Eighth Fleet. This section, something of an equivalent to the Admiralty's DDOD(I) Branch, was charged with devising and developing plans for naval diversions, amphibious raids, and cover and deception plans. Through this mechanism both the Beach Jumpers and attached S&R personnel operated under the direction of Task Group 80.4, a small flotilla with the mandate for deception operations and air-sea rescue.[124]

Ultimately the most prolific deployment of US special maritime formations occurred with the extensive UDT organisation that developed in the Central Pacific theatre. The first UDT deployments in January 1944 during operation 'Flintlock' in the Marshall Islands were somewhat uncoordinated affairs in which the UDTs were not adequately integrated into the main landings. Subsequently, however, lessons were learnt and, following lobbying from the commander of UDT-1, more efficient arrangements were made, particularly over communications, that led to greater coordination of UDT activities with the overall landing plans.[125] Despite this, up until the capture of Leyte in December 1944, each UDT was managed independently of one another under the 'administrative cognizance of Commander Amphibious Forces, US Pacific Fleet [Turner]' and each would be independently assigned to various Task Force commanders for operational deployment. This was not the most efficient arrangement. The lack of centralised procedures made the training and administration of the Teams difficult, and their cooperation and any institutional sharing of information and techniques much more problematic.[126]

It was not until shortly before the Lingayen Gulf landings on Luzon that a new UDT command mechanism developed with the appointment of Captain B. Hall Hanlon as 'Commander Underwater Demolition Teams, Amphibious Forces, US Pacific Fleet'. This new UDT Command put both the UDTs, their fast transport craft, and Close Fire Support Groups (DD and LCI(G)) all under one head and allowed a flexible and effective tactical framework to develop that 'provided almost instantaneous response on order from a central authority, that could take care of predictable exigencies' before

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[124] Admiral Cunningham, C-in-C Mediterranean, 'US Navy "Special Operations" Units', 7 March 1944, WO 204/8425

[125] Commander E.D. Brewster, UDT 1, Report on operation 'Flintlock', 8 February 1944, RG 38, World War II Action and Operational Reports, Box 787

[126] Commander UDT Squadron Two to C-in-C US Fleet, 31 August 1945, RG 38, World War II War Diaries, Box 535

and during an assault.[127] Later still, in June 1945, in readiness for the projected invasion of the Japanese Home Islands, the UDT command was enlarged, with the Teams divided into two operational Squadrons and placed under a UDT Flotilla under Captain R.H. Rogers, who would have 'direct command' of all UDTs and any ships 'in which these teams are embarked'.[128] Command arrangements were thus able to keep pace with the extensive growth of the UDT organisation. What had begun as a collection of autonomous formations individually operating under one body had, in less than two years, become, a large and efficient joint command organisation that encompassed not only the personnel of the special forces, but also the resources and personnel involved in their transportation and support.

The importance of clear command structures was essential to the correct application, and ergo the effectiveness and value, of wartime specialist formations. The development of clear methods and structures of command and control for these units during the Second World War followed a definite and prominent learning curve. Early command approaches for specialist formations were often widely inadequate, either too restrictive and convoluted or, conversely, too informal and decentralised. In time, however, and a natural concomitant to the growing martial proficiencies of the Allies, the structures of the control and employment of specialist formations became more professional and efficient. Specialist formations were increasingly integrated into regular military mechanisms and, as this occurred, understanding about their existence, methods and utility naturally increased whilst reticence and antagonism towards them declined. As Field-Marshal Slim well highlighted: 'It was not until the activities of all clandestine bodies operating in or near our troops were coordinated, and where necessary controlled, through a senior officer on the staff of the commander of the area, that confusion, ineffectiveness, and lost opportunities were avoided'.[129] It was natural that proper command channels and 'educated consumers' would develop with time, once knowledge had been amassed; people with direct experience had risen in rank; lessons had been learnt; and organisations to advise higher commands about the potential of special operations had developed.

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[127] Captain B. Hall Hanlon, Commander UDTs, Iwo Jima After Action Report, 12 March 1945, RG 38, World War II Action and Operational Reports, Box 787
[128] UDT Squadron Two War Diary, RG 38, World War II War Diaries, Box 535
[129] Slim, Field-Marshal Sir William, *Defeat into Victory*, (Cassell: London, 1956) pp.548-549

Although the uniquely apposite circumstances of the Desert War highlighted that special forces could be profitably employed autonomously with very loose command mechanisms, as a whole, however, this arrangement was not practicable. As the Allies regained the initiative the autonomy of these units had to decline, not only to make best use of them in less suitable theatres, but also to prevent competition; tie these units into the regular battle; and prevent them from jeopardising other operations. Strict control was difficult, but essential. By the start of 1943, therefore, it was becoming widely accepted that the best manner for special forces to be used was to form dedicated command branches, responsible to the highest possible authority in theatre, to cater for their administration and coordination. Such moves centralised (and to an extent conventionalised) their establishment, reduced animosity (via a reduction of their free-booting or bandit image), and led to better tasking of these units thereby increasing their potential value. Despite this, the more successful of these organisations still granted individual formations a notable margin of latitude for their own planning, training and tactical control.

Commensurate with their transition and conventionalisation of role the command and control of commando formations became, at least in the British example, gradually adapted to a more regular brigade organisation, a move that increased their opportunity to undertake protracted deployments and operate in support of the conventional battle. Many British specialist formations were fortunate to have arisen under the patronage of COHQ, which as an organisation with a chair on the Chiefs of Staff Committee, could directly look after their interests and lobby for their employment. The lack of anything approaching the British COHQ and SS Brigade organisation was clearly to the detriment of the command and control of most US ranger-style formations. The American perception of elite light-infantry units as temporary expedients largely precluded the establishment of any centralised or theatre-level command infrastructure to cater for the command and administration of these units. The absence of clear arrangements through which higher commands could be advised on the tasks, capabilities, requirements and availability of these units, as well as the lack of any formal mechanism through which their activities could be planned and vetted, would (as the next chapter will highlight) place unnecessary complications on the proper application of these formations. Such omissions were the most severe for the US Army Rangers, and would afflict both the FSSF and Marauders to a somewhat lesser extent because of their more 'familiar' organisational structures. Of the US ranger-style

formations, it was only the 6th Rangers and USMC Raiders that were ultimately able to forge a workable integrated command and control system; the former because the unique conditions of theatre and the patronage of Krueger; the latter, ironically, stemming from USMC motivations not to harness the irregular but to conventionalise it.

In the field of special forces, however, US command and control mechanisms were, as a whole, very effective and, in places, more efficient than those of the British. Their later entry into the Second World War enabled the US to learn from the mistakes their ally had made before them. The US induction in irregular warfare would avoid many of the pitfalls and problems that the British previously experienced with the command and control of special forces; they were able to avoid the depredations of the 'private army' and circumvent many of the inter-agency and inter-service control complications. The existence of OSS as a body to centralise a large proportion of American special operations (not to mention intelligence activities also) was of the utmost importance to the effective command and control of many US special forces. Its existence ensured that the command infrastructure for operational units such as the OGs and MUs were actually in place *before* the units took to the field; something that, because of the exigencies of the situation upon their inception, was not the case with early British formations which would be subjected to much trial and error before a workable framework for their command would develop. The effective control of US special forces would, of course, follow a learning curve. Even with command infrastructure in place it would take time for the best arrangements to be established – a point well illustrated, for example, both by the frustrations that the OGs had working under the SO Branch, and by the late development of a unified UDT Command – as a whole, however, it seems clear that this curve was, in places, significantly shallower for the US than it had been for the British.

Even with the existence of organisations such as COHQ and OSS, it remains clear that the command and control of specialist formations during the Second World War was certainly hindered by the existence of many cumbersome and confused organisations each with vested irregular interests that uneasily coexisted in a climate of mutual suspicion and secrecy. Unity of command amongst all these irregular groups, in midst of the many complexities facing the Allies in the Second World War, was, with the exception of the Southwest Pacific (due to Krueger and MacArthur's sponsorship and

direct control of only the units that they had authorised), an unreasonable and unobtainable goal. It would have required a massive effort, a total upheaval of early mechanisms, not to mention a clear idea of what specialist formations were for and what they could achieve, to have developed a unified (let alone Allied) 'Joint Special Operations Command' or equivalent organisation. Given the complex inter-service and inter-organisational problems to surmount as well as the political and military complications of total war, these limitations are understandable. With no pre-existent doctrine in place to guide on how to control and use specialist elements, these had to be discovered almost by trial and error. The command and control of the Anglo-American specialist formations must be viewed as evolutionary; gradually becoming more efficient and effective as the war progressed. When it is considered that it was not until 1987 that both Britain and the US established integrated joint-service organisations for the control of SOF (in UK Special Forces and USSOCOM), the achievements in developing complex branches and control mechanisms for the nascent creations of the Second World War, exemplified well by the SOG and 'P Division' or the extensive UDT organisation, appear quite considerable.

Chapter 5
Misapplication, misuse and disuse

With one eye firmly on the past Colin Gray has written that specialist formations are 'probably uniquely vulnerable to misunderstanding and misapplication'.[1] The study of Anglo-American specialist formations of the Second World War certainly seems to bear out this contention. Within the history (be it narrative, war diary, or biography) of almost every wartime commando or special forces formation there is mention, however fleeting, of their having been used inappropriately; tasked with undertaking an unsuitable role; or having been frustrated by unemployment or neglect. The 'correct' use of specialist elements assumes many factors: a well-defined and clear cut role and doctrine for their employment; a dedicated command organisation to cater for their application; an educated consumer versed in, and amenable to, their employment; an equally informed or innovative practitioner; and apposite circumstances and means available for their use. The interaction between these variables largely determined the manner in which specialist formations were utilised during the war. The existence of these factors was, however, far from universally present; they often evolved in time, and their interplay was prone to significant fluctuations. This chapter serves to examine where and why misuse and disuse of specialist formations occurred, and highlight how these occurrences formed part of the greater evolutionary process governing their application in the Second World War.

The previous chapter illustrated two distinct limitations: that command preconceptions towards specialist elements could be rife with suspicion and animosity; and that the manner in which specialist elements were directed and controlled was not clear-cut, well understood, nor, at least in their formative stages, particularly efficient. These limitations alone could be of clear impediment to the 'correct' application of specialist formations. Unless given a distinct *carte blanche* for autonomy of action (a rare occurrence), specialist formations remained reliant upon sensible 'tasking' for their use, which, in turn, had as a cardinal requirement, direction by higher commanders who, if not adverse to their existence, were at least educated in their use. As Gray states: 'The strategic utility of special operations forces depends at least as much on the imagination and competence of their political and military masters as it does on their

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[1] Gray (1996), p.164

tactical effectiveness'.[2] One of the clearest reasons for the misuse or disuse of specialist formations stemmed, dislike and distrust aside, from widespread ignorance and misunderstanding amongst higher echelons as to the existence, purpose, and manner of employing irregular forces.

As nascent creations, an element of ignorance and confusion in the use of specialist formations was to be expected. There were no manuals at Camberley or Leavenworth to advise on their employment, and, there was no guarantee that even after efforts were taken to instruct conventional elements (via command branches and liaison officers etc.) in special operations that these would be either understood or embraced. Ignorance, distrust, and misunderstanding resulted, at various stages, to misuse and misapplication. The protracted and much derided deployments of Nos.1 and 6 Commandos in the line during the North African campaign was, for example, in the opinion of the Commandos, caused by the 'ignorance of all staffs to understand the roles of Commandos.'[3] As Laycock subsequently stated, Force Commanders

> .... are only too willing to use Commandos to their best advantage during the initial landings, but that subsequently they regard them as unwanted and unnecessary units, with the result that Commandos are invariably allotted tasks for which they are neither organised, trained nor equipped, and which would be better undertaken by regular infantry.[4]

These North African deployments of the Commandos were, however, educational and endemic to the learning process about the use of these formations. Understanding the difficulties that they faced in such deployments, the Commando establishment was accordingly altered to better deal with protracted deployments, and by the invasion of Sicily 'the conception of Commandos had become definite and well-established. Their organisation was well-tried and battle-proved; their capabilities well-known and their limitations appreciated'.[5]

Similarly instructive was the misuse of the LRDG in the summer of 1941 when, despite earlier successes, the unit was deployed in both tactical reconnaissance and static defensive roles at Kufra, actions deemed inappropriate for a mobile long range reconnaissance force. Such deployments led, however, to no great disaster and,

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[2] *Ibid.*, p.149
[3] Captain Philip Dunne to Laycock, undated, KCLMA Laycock, File 16
[4] Laycock, 'Reorganisation of SS Brigade', 1 April 1943, DEFE 2/1051
[5] 'History of the Commandos in the Mediterranean', DEFE 2/700

according to Lloyd Owen, 'everyone learnt some excellent lessons from all this, and the LRDG were seldom again used on tasks best carried out by reconnaissance aircraft or by armoured cars.'[6] Patrol Commander Crichton-Stuart went as far as stating that '....much of the ultimate success of the LRDG could be traced, in retrospect, to the lessons of that "wasted" summer of 1941'.[7] The Alamo Scouts in some of their earlier deployments also faced similar misapplication. During deployment in Hollandia-Aitape, for example, I Corps, which had no experience in their methods, used Scout teams inappropriately in risky tactical combat patrols that duplicated the functions of their existent regular reconnaissance units.[8] This misapplication was however, as with the LRDG, educational and led, in part, to the development of more efficient practices for the deployment of Scout teams and the creation of a special staff under Sixth Army's G-2 Section to coordinate their deployments.

Misuse as part of a learning process was, however, reliant on the willingness, or ability, of the broader military organisation to learn and adapt. Despite having faced similar problems to the Commandos during their evolution of role during the North African campaign, the Rangers never adapted either doctrinally or organisationally as well as the Commandos did. The constant refusal to make anything more than tactical concessions (in support weaponry etc.); the rejection of a Ranger Force Headquarters; and the concomitant absence of a Ranger doctrine, a formal statement outlining their capabilities and limitations, undoubtedly paved the way towards their greatest misuse at Cisterna where the 1st and 3rd Ranger Battalions were annihilated. The absence of a proper Ranger Force Headquarters prevented long range planning and offered no advice on whether an 'assignment is a proper one for Rangers'.[9] Their perpetual provisional status ensured commanders had no guide towards the employment of Rangers and consequently, 'commanders were left with only a vague, intuitive sense of the purpose of such troops.' [10] As a consequence, the Rangers were prone to face 'mission creep' as commanders tended to deploy the units in the conventional manner with which they were versed. With these limitations in place, misapplication at Cisterna was made all the more likely. However, as Jeff Stewart has accurately stated:

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[6] Owen, D.L. (2003), p.46
[7] Crichton-Stuart, Michael, *G Patrol: The Story of the Guards Patrol of the Long Range Desert Group*, (Tandem: London, 1958) p.87
[8] Zedric, p.114
[9] Major Murray, CO 4th Rangers to General McNair, 28 November 1943, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21075; Folder INBN-4-0.1
[10] Hogan, *Raiders*, p.26

'In order to declare misuse of the Rangers [at Cisterna], it must first be established what their proper use would be. This was never done.'[11]

Cisterna cannot, however, be blamed on command ignorance. At the time of the battle Ranger Force was under the control of General Truscott's 3rd Infantry Division and neither Truscott, who had first conceived of the Rangers and 'knew more about their capabilities and limitations than any other general officer', nor Darby, their commander, actually opposed the deployment; both 'considered the mission a proper one, which should have been well within the capabilities these fine soldiers'.[12]

Misuse thus did not only stem from ill-informed or sceptical higher commanders, but also, at times, from the personnel and leaders of the units themselves. As an emergent genus, not even the practitioners of special operations were, from the outset, fully versed in their art or optimum manner of employment. Gray has drawn attention to instances where 'opportunities for special operations were arguably lost because no one, including the special warriors themselves, were sufficiently unconventional in their thinking. .... Unconventional war is a state of mind as well as a mission and a distinctive set of tactics.'[13] Certainly a number of commanders charged with leading specialist formations did not adequately understand, or even believe in, their unconventional mandate, and accepting employment in a more conventional manner, were disinclined to push for tasking in the same manner that a more unorthodox character, or an individual better versed in irregular warfare, might have done. It is quite fallacious to assume that despite the proficiency and professional qualities of specialist formations, that all involved, higher commanders and practitioners alike, immediately realised, understood, or cared about the best manner for their employment. The latitude given to certain special forces commanders to perform autonomous acts presupposed that they had the 'necessary strategic, tactical and man-management skills'. As Ford assessed in application to the SAS Brigade in France: 'Some did; some did not, and the results their operations produced reflected their abilities'.[14]

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[11] Stewart, 'Ranger Force', pp.46-50
[12] *Ibid.*, p.49; Truscott, p.314
[13] Gray, Colin S., *Modern Strategy*, (Oxford University Press, 1999) p.290
[14] Ford (2003), p.22

Such problems were perhaps most acute in the ranger example; an undoubted concomitant both to the widespread American perception of specialist formations as being fleeting and provisional expedients, and to the general absence of 'errant captains' or 'founding fathers' as seen amongst the British examples. William Orlando Darby, commander of the 1st, 3rd and 4th Ranger Battalions, although a justifiably lauded fighting leader, was arguably one such character. Darby had a 'conventional outlook' and was, in the opinion of Hogan, 'hardly the maverick one so often finds in command of a special unit. Lacking commitment to a concept of special operations, he perceived his unit more as an elite fighting force than as a formation with a unique mission, and he does not seem to have opposed the use of his men as line infantry', and, as has been noted, he did not object to the use of his force at Cisterna.[15] Similar cases could be advanced regarding Merritt Edson of the 1st Raider Battalion who, like Darby was undoubtedly a solid fighting leader, but lacked the unorthodox streak of Carlson, his counterpart in the 2nd Raider Battalion; equally pronounced is Brigadier Merrill of the Marauders who was neither unorthodox in outlook, nor physically up to the challenge of leading the Marauders in the field. Furthermore, his close association with Stilwell did not make him the best man to fight in the Marauder's corner when lobbying for correct employment.

These issues were compounded by the fact that, being perceived as temporary units, many American commanders had no path for advancement within irregular communities. Just as the 'errant captain' was foreign to the inception of American specialist formations; once they had proven their mettle Darby, Frederick, Rudder, Carlson *et al.* were, albeit often reluctantly, promoted out of specialist formations and returned to the command of conventional units. Within the US specialist formations there were few comparable figures to the Stirlings, Courtneys, and Churchills who forged careers at the helm of specialist formations, nor the likes of Wingate, Calvert, Franks or Mills-Roberts who, in addition to having practical experience in the field, were to have a hand at commanding and directing these formations at a higher level. There was certainly no American equivalent to Robert Laycock, for example, a man who in addition to commanding some of the first Commandos (and participating in actions such as the evacuation of Crete and the 'Rommel raid'), also commanded, on two separate occasions, early attempts at nominal Commando Brigades, before eventually assuming the post of CCO that placed him at the helm of all Commandos

[15] Hogan, *Raiders*, p.18

and ancillary units. American commanders, because of both the absence of an equivalent to COHQ, or the SS Brigade, as well as the stigma of these temporary formations, had little equivalent to the 'special forces community' of the British (aside from perhaps OSS, which itself was seen as provisional and treated with suspicion), and their ability to learn lessons and develop clear doctrines suffered accordingly.[16]

Social connections, patronage, and the 'old boy network' featured heavily amongst a number of British specialist formations. As OSS officer Franklin Lindsay observed whilst in Yugoslavia:

> All his [Fitzroy Maclean's] officers appeared to be old friends and several had been together in North Africa fighting against Rommel's forces. These British officers who were drawn to irregular operations seemed not only to have been together in early wartime operations but also to have had many close school and family ties. In contrast, in three years overseas I had met only one person I had known before the war.[17]

The Maclean example is particularly pronounced; the 'casually opportunist' manner in which he first orchestrated the dispatch of specialist formations to Vis providing fine illustration of the British social system at work within irregular fields. In late-1943 military activities in support of Tito in Yugoslavia were dominated by a special forces 'educated' group of people. Maclean had personally assessed the validity of mounting special operations and raids from Vis with his former SAS colleagues Vivian Street and Randolph Churchill; and in late-1943 Maclean arranged the deployment of No.2 Commando to the island on the basis of casually meeting Brigadier Tom Churchill (CO 2nd SS Brigade) at a new year's eve party in Molfetta. All arrangements were put in place before Maclean approached General Alexander for authorisation, who subsequently lent him his own airplane to fly to Tehran to confer this scheme with the Prime Minister.[18] Aside from the initial recruiting practices of OSS, and the 2nd

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[16] After the war, however, the resurgence of US special forces capabilities would stem from 'founding fathers' who had learnt their craft during the Second World War. Fine examples are provided by Aaron Bank (a Jedburgh) 'the father of US special forces' and Russell Volckmann (leader of guerrillas on the Philippines) who together helped develop the US Army Special Forces; Roger Hilsman (a Marauder and in OSS Detachment 101) who, working for the State Department, became Kennedy's advisor on irregular warfare and Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs; or William Colby (Jedburgh and later leader of NORSO group) who later became head of the CIA.

[17] Lindsay, p.248

[18] McConville, pp.108-109; 174; Maclean, pp.410-412

Raider's 'Roosevelt connection',[19] there were few comparable examples of such informal social networks at play behind American specialist formations.

Misuse based on command reticence or ignorance was, however, less prevalent than misuse as a result of necessity. Hard-pressed and under-reinforced commanders who had a group of well trained and experienced men under their charge would often be only too willing to thrust specialist units into the breach if expedient, almost regardless of the role they would be asked to perform. In the event of an unfavourable or deteriorating situation on the ground specialist forces could thus merely represent a source of readily available manpower. The potential for forces to be misused as such was pronounced, and it would take great wisdom, foresight and confidence for commanders not to employ specialist elements incorrectly in desperate circumstances; to not ruin a thoroughbred by having it plough the field when the mule is down. As McMichael observed: 'Once a unit arrives in theatre – its special capabilities notwithstanding – its availability irresistibly tempts commanders to employ it.'[20] Gray similarly contended that: 'Because they are unusually well endowed with warrior virtues, commanders tend to use elite units – and special operations forces – much as teenagers drive sports cars and with similar and predictable results.'[21] The attachment of a specialist formation to a field command could result in the force swiftly becoming overworked as the command became over-reliant on the force, utilising its willing and capable 'warriors' for every difficult assignment including the more mundane day-to-day activities (such as tactical reconnaissance and combat patrols) which conventional forces would have been more than capable of undertaking.[22]

Such instances occurred almost as soon as the first varieties of specialist units reached the field. The desperate situation on the ground in Norway in 1940, and an absence of alternative resources with which to tackle it, had soon dispelled any notion that the Independent Companies would be able to act as guerrillas and they were almost immediately used in line infantry duties. The fate of Nos.1 and 6 Commandos in North Africa was, in a similar vein, partially blamed on an 'obvious temporary shortage of

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[19] 'As one wag remarked, "Second Raiders will never need any artillery support. Carlson's always got twenty-one guns in his hip pocket".' Twining, p.178
[20] McMichael, p.211
[21] Gray (1996), p.167
[22] Laycock, 'Reorganisation of SS Brigade', 1 April 1943, DEFE 2/1051

Infantry troops in the forward areas.'[23] As General Kenneth Anderson, GOC First Army wrote to Mountbatten as the Commandos were withdrawn from North Africa:

> I know I misused them, strained them to the utmost and kept them far too long. But we were hard pressed in those days, and every single man had to do the job of ten without rest or respite. The Commandos naturally never complained and always fought brilliantly. .... Alas their losses were heavy. .... I was sorry to lose them, but glad to be able at last to let them go.[24]

The similarly inappropriate use of the 1st Rangers in this campaign principally occurred because, as far as General Terry Allen of the 1st Infantry Division (to whom the Rangers were attached) was concerned, 'the Rangers were proven troops that were available. Faced with an uncertain battlefield situation, he would not hesitate to throw them into the breach.'[25]

Stilwell's mishandling of the Marauders was also comparable. Colonel Charles Hunter, second-in-command of the unit (but often *de facto* leader in light of Merrill's ill-health), reflected at the end of their campaign, 'the unit had been badly misused and had suffered unnecessarily' and placed the blame on the 'personality and personal ambition' of Stilwell.[26] The ultimate abuse of the Marauders was over-employment, Stilwell was too reliant on them and used them to the point of decimation. As the only US ground forces at his disposal Stilwell saw the Marauders as a source of dependable personnel to shore up and rectify deficiencies with his Chinese forces. Such was their perceived value to him that by appointing Merrill, one of his most trusted officers, to their command Stilwell had actively sought to maintain a hand on their planning and to actually prevent their misuse.[27] Their first operation, against Walawbum, was thus conducted as intended, a successful medium-range penetration which cost the Marauders few casualties and, most importantly, saw the unit be swiftly relieved by Chinese forces.[28] In later operations, however, Stilwell's increasing reliance upon the Marauders ensured that he employed them to undertake a series of costly blocking operations without granting them adequate time to rest and recover their strength. Despite Hunter's claims, however, Stilwell's over-reliance upon and misuse of the Marauders principally stemmed from the political imperative he faced to keep the only

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[23] Captain Dunne to Laycock, undated, KCLMA Laycock, File 16
[24] Anderson to Mountbatten, 23 May 1943, WO 32/10416
[25] Hogan, *Raiders*, p.26
[26] Quoted in Bjorge, Gary J., *Merrill's Marauders,* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1996) p.2
[27] Prefer, pp.71-72
[28] Bjorge, p.23

US ground forces in theatre employed and to demonstrate to coalition members his commitment to the war in Burma.[29] It would have been quite unthinkable for Stilwell to have withdrawn the Marauders whilst continuing to remain reliant on British and Chinese formations under his charge. As Gary Bjorge has asserted: 'Without Galahad to help hold up the coalition banner of shared suffering, the combined force would have lacked a crucial unifying element and a catalyst for action', the Marauders were thus not so much victims of hubris as they were of 'the exigencies and requirements of coalition warfare and combined operations.'[30]

The squandering of highly-trained, experienced, *corps d'élite* in a role for which they were neither prepared, nor equipped, was of course, ultimately not cost-effective, however, should adverse circumstances require their committal in alternative roles or in less apposite conditions, the use of specialist formations in such a capacity was not necessarily improper. The use of large commando and ranger formations in non-specialised or inappropriate roles because of operational imperative was both common, and at times, quite understandable; to be cost-effective specialist formations cannot exist in isolation and must remain subservient to the direction and requirements of the greater campaigns they assist. For example, although the use of Nos.7 and 50/52(ME) Commandos to cover the evacuation of Crete was a role for which they were neither trained nor, most importantly, equipped for, and one that ultimately caused the two Commandos significant loss, it was, nevertheless, a role that they undertook with determination and which was of value in aiding the evacuation of a number of other personnel from the island. Although both unplanned and costly, this deployment, so often considered inappropriate, was arguably of more value than these Commandos' earlier 'correct', but failed, actions at Casterlorizzo in February or Bardia in April 1941. The use of specialist troops *in extremis*, whilst costly, was not a true misuse; and gradually, particularly following the commando transition in role, the use of specialist personnel in a 'fire brigade' or strategic reserve role became more common. In Italy, for example, both the Rangers and the FSSF attached to Fifth Army were particularly prone to be used as such; Fifth Army's shortage of personnel ensured that General Mark Clark 'could not afford to hold special formations in reserve until suitable missions presented themselves'.[31]

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[29] Hogan (1995), p.110; Larrabee, Eric, *Commander in Chief*, (Andre Deutsch: London, 1987) p.565
[30] Bjorge, pp.3; 44
[31] Hogan, *Raiders*, p.44

The 6th Ranger battalion was, for a variety of reasons, considered unique amongst its counterparts as having been the only Ranger Battalion to have not been 'misused' as line infantry at some stage during the war.[32] Despite this, had Sixth Army been faced with a desperate operational situation, such as a Kasserine Pass or an Edson's Ridge; or a crippling shortage of personnel, as encountered by Fifth Army in Italy or Twenty-First Army Group in Northwest Europe, it seems likely that the 6th Rangers would have been used in any manner possible to alleviate the situation, even if that meant so-called misuse in conventional tasks. To have done so would have been quite correct. Both higher and unit commanders alike seemed to have had an appreciation of this. Despite having constantly lobbied for independent and specialist employment of the Commandos, Laycock clearly appreciated that *in extremis* Commandos could, and should, be used in any capacity, writing in 1943 that:

> SS troops should never be given tasks which could equally be well carried out by Infantry unless the Commander can satisfy himself that .... There are no other troops available.... [or that] he, or superior or neighbouring Commanders, will not require them for more important specialised tasks at a later stage in the campaign.[33]

General Bradley displayed similar logic writing, in application to parachute troops, that they are 'too expensively trained to be spent as conventional doughboys unless an emergency warrants their employment in this way'.[34]

Much more damning, and potentially far more damaging than the use of a commando-style light infantry force in a conventional infantry manner when necessity demanded, was the deployment of smaller special forces units in similar circumstances. Few examples illustrate this contention better than the employment of an experienced and intelligence-orientated LRDG squadron in an assault to recapture the island of Levitha in October 1943; a task for which they were neither trained, equipped, nor suited. The LRDG were desperately opposed to mounting the operation, but 'no appeal to the GOC [Maitland Wilson] would rescind his [somewhat nebulous] orders that it was vital to the Navy that the enemy garrison should be liquidated'.[35] As David Lloyd Owen was to state: 'We knew the raid was pointless, we knew it violated all the principles by

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[32] *Ibid.*, pp.88-90
[33] Laycock, 'Reorganisation of SS Brigade', 1 April 1943, DEFE 2/1051
[34] Bradley, p.132
[35] LRDG War Diary, September – November 1943, WO 201/818

which our small hit-and-run attacks were guided and we had no confidence in its direction by commanders who had few ideas how to handle us', he believed it was a 'wicked and misplaced' political move to 'to regain by a spectacular success the confidence that Cairo had lost in the direction of the Aegean battle'.[36] Of the fifty men on the raid, forty-one experienced and trained specialists were lost, killed or captured, more casualties sustained in one operation than the unit had lost in the three years prior. Soon after this unnecessary and costly operation, the LRDG were to suffer another great blow when tasked, alongside elements of the SBS, again inappropriately (but more understandably because of operational, if not strategic, necessity) with, forming part of the garrison on Leros. The fall of which, in November 1943, led to the small unit taking further losses, ten men killed including its commander Jake Easonsmith, and a nearly-crippling over one-hundred men captured (although a large proportion of which would later escape captivity to return to the unit). As the War Diary of the LRDG acknowledged, the garrison duties on Leros were 'a gross misuse of LRDG Patrols who were trained and equipped for special tasks, and not for mere garrison duties the job of the normal infantryman'.[37]

Clearly, therefore, being held in high regard (which the LRDG at this stage certainly, and rightly, was) was no protection against misuse. It could even exacerbate the situation, a unit's prior successes, their reputation or aura of elitism, could provoke false estimations of their abilities. The fate of Ranger Force at Cisterna can be blamed, at least in part, on their track record of success and 'their leaders' [including Darby] absolute faith in the Rangers to accomplish any mission'.[38] As if to emphasise this point, General Bradley stated that the Rangers 'formed as professional combat unit as existed in the American army. .... the Rangers became so competent that by the war's end I honestly believe there was nothing they could not do'.[39] Perception of misuse of specialist formations is often tinged with hindsight, however, and generally follows tactical failure and, or, heavy casualties. Levitha was an inappropriate role for the LRDG, but had they carried the day and their attack been a success, with little or few casualties, it may well have been regarded as another notable achievement for a versatile formation.

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[36] Lloyd Owen, *The larder was often bare*, (Unpublished memoir) in IWM Lloyd-Owen PP/MCR/C13
[37] LRDG Operations in Aegean, 11/9/43 to 30/11/43, in *Ibid.*
[38] Stewart, 'Ranger Force', p.70
[39] Bradley, p.139

There is a thin line between successes and failure in special operations and even heavy casualties are not necessarily indicative of misapplication: some of the more famous and indeed lauded 'correct' deployments of specialist formations (such as the St. Nazaire raid or the capture of the Irsch-Zerf road) could result in quite startling casualties. A GHQ MEF appraisal actually perceived the Commandos as being 'in fact expendable and the rule guiding their employment is largely "Is this operation worth the number of casualties it will cost"?'[40] Such a mentality was certainly a concern, in July 1943 Lieutenant-Colonel Bruce Lumsden of the newly formed No.41(RM) Commando expressed resentment of an attitude, he believed to be prevalent in the SS Brigade, 'that unless a Commando Unit has heavy casualties the job is not any good', and expressed fears that his unit would be 'used in a pointless Operation evolved for the benefit of the Special Service Brigade rather than the furtherance of the job in hand'.[41]

The loss of personnel, even proportionally horrendous losses, in the right application was rarely, however, considered inappropriate so long as the ends justified the means. This was an understanding equally applicable to special forces, as highlighted perfectly by a 1943 statement regarding the employment of the SBS, that stated: '.... forlorn hopes should not be undertaken and that the lives of valuable and highly trained men should not be endangered unless there is reasonable chance of direct success and unless the objective is worthwhile'.[42] Furthermore, for special operations, as Colin Gray has asserted: 'Tactical failure at the right time, in the right way, and for the right reasons can amount to strategic success'.[43] Thus whilst the June 1944 raid on the island of Braĉ ('Flounced'), for example, was a costly 'tactical failure' for the Yugoslav partisans, Commandos and OGs taking part, it did succeed in its objective of diverting almost 2,000 German soldiers to the Dalmatian coast and away from the offensive on the mainland threatening Tito at this time. In the opinion of McConville, at the time a RM Commando subaltern, the raid represented a 'worthwhile contribution to the achievement of the overall strategic objective'.[44]

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[40] 'Raiding Forces – the story of an Independent Command in the Aegean, 1943-1945', WO 201/2836 p.7
[41] Lieutenant-Colonel Lumsden to Adjutant General Royal Marines, 20 July 1943, ADM 202/103
[42] 'Past, Present, and Future Activities of the Special Boat Section', 23 November 1943, DEFE 2/740
[43] Gray, 'Handfuls of Heroes', p.2
[44] McConville, pp.232-233

If losses, and even certain inappropriate additional duties such as acting in a 'fire brigade' exigency capacity, were to be expected, tolerated, and even made legitimate, what was potentially more damning than use in a non-specialised role, was disuse: holding back valuable formations for an indeterminable amount of time until apposite circumstances for employment developed. There was a fine balance between potentially wasting specialist elements in inappropriate use, and of negating their value entirely by letting them wither on the vine. Constant deployment of specialist formations was an unattainable goal, to remain 'special' they often required at least some (occasionally much) time to train and recruit, or, in the instance of casualties, to refit, reinforce or recuperate. Yet in instances where specialist formations were underemployed for long periods of time, it is possible to argue that any employment, even inappropriate, would have been of more value than their not having been used at all. After all, the value of a unit remains proportionate to its use.

Fine example of the ills of disuse are seen with the Middle East Commando (later known as the 1st SS Regiment). Principally recruited from 'Layforce' remnants, predominantly No.51(ME) Commando, the unit suffered from an identity crisis, lacked any clearly defined role and 'never had the *esprit de corps* and cohesion of its forebears'.[45] Initially it was thought the Commando could be incorporated into the regional SOE pool as a 'fifth column force', but such plans came to nought.[46] In an effort to gain employment, in March 1942 'C' Squadron of the Regiment was attached to the LRDG, but 'met with many misfortunes' because, as the unit's commander stated, 'the men of this Regiment have never received training in this type of work and are entirely unsuited for it.'[47] In a similar proposal of May 1942 it was suggested that 'A' Squadron of the Regiment be deployed in 'short or medium range reconnaissance and sabotage activities'.[48] This again, did not transpire. Inactivity and comparative failures gave ammunition for detractors, whilst many of the 'not unnaturally ... depressed and restless' personnel in the unit would apply for transfer to the various special forces.[49] The Regiment was continually frustrated and never able to find suitable employment. Their fundamental problem was one of unnecessary retention of a Commando-modelled formation in a theatre unsuited towards their use. One year

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[45] Messenger *et al.*, p.120
[46] Brigadier Davy, DDO to CGS, 25 April 1942, WO 201/732
[47] Reports of Lieutenant-Colonel John Graham, CO 1st SS Regiment to GHQ MEF, 13 July 1942, WO 201/732
[48] Eighth Army to GHQ MEF, 7 May 1942, WO 201/2624
[49] Auchinleck, 'Future of 1st SS Regiment', 24 and 26 July 1942, WO 201/728

before their eventual disbandment Laycock had warned that in the Middle East there were simply 'too many commandos, and not enough work'.[50] GHQ MEF had similarly advised that it was 'wasteful to keep first-class material in units whose opportunities for employment are exceedingly rare'; General Auchinleck likened this disuse to 'keeping a valuable cow and milking it once or twice a year'.[51] Despite these concerns, the Regiment was to languish for over a year, undertaking little worthwhile deployment, before its inevitable disbandment in September 1942 paved the way, almost in Darwinesque terms, for the creation of the 1st SAS Regiment.

Wartime debate over the relative merits of use over non-use of specialist formations is nowhere better illustrated than the high-level discussions that occurred over the employment of the FSSF. In September 1942 plans for the Force to be used against Norway, as originally intended, were postponed indefinitely, and rather than disband the formation General Marshall, Field-Marshal Dill, and the Force itself all pressured for deployment, in almost any capacity, so as to maintain their *esprit de corps* that risked becoming eroded with inaction.[52] Mountbatten and Churchill amongst others, on the other hand, were keen for the Force's skills in arctic warfare not be squandered in unrelated deployments, believing that 'to yield to impatience seems most unsound militarily', and would, in the opinion of Lieutenant-General Andrews, be a 'grave mistake'.[53] With no such deployments on the horizon, however, and the Force reportedly 'growing stale', deployment in an alternative environment, or disbandment, became the only options. Yet to disband would have had been a total waste of an expensively and intensely trained cohesive unit, and whilst its eventual deployments against Kiska, Italy and France were not as initially intended, they do, however, show the merits of use, even if somewhat removed from original intention, over non-use.

Conversely, however, withholding from deployment smaller special forces that had undergone extensive training could be preferable to risking their misuse in inappropriate roles or circumstances. Solid example of this is provided by the SRU combat swimmers who, following tropical water training in Nassau, were withheld from numerous cold-water deployments from Britain and the Mediterranean. To have

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[50] Laycock, 'Note on Commandos', 11 September 1941, WO 201/731
[51] Minutes of COS Committee, 2 August 1941, WO 193/405
[52] Field-Marshal Dill, Joint Staff Mission Washington to War Cabinet, 3 March 1943, WO 106/1974
[53] COS to Dill, 5 March 1943, WO 106/1974; Minutes of COS Committee, 16 December 1942, WO 106/1974; Lieutenant-General F.M. Andrews, USFOR London to AGWAR, 12 February 1943, RG 218, Central Decimal File 1942-45, Box 285; Folder CCS 370.5

deployed COHQ's only tropically-orientated combat swimmers in an *ad hoc* role (such as clearing mines in French ports) in Europe would have been wholly inappropriate, and it was correct that the unit's time was spent in supplementary training until it could be sent for deployment in the Far East.[54] Similar restraint of employment was shown with the COPPs sent to SEAC in early 1944. For over six months these Parties were widely unemployed, both because of the lack of information about their value and there having been little opportunity for large-scale amphibious operations in this theatre at that time. There was concern that if this unemployment continued these units would be used for 'very elementary reconnaissance and pilotage work .... nothing like commensurate with their training and qualifications', a course of action that would have led to unnecessary risks and would have lowered the 'standard and morale' of the Parties.[55] Those OSS MU groups deployed to this theatre were equally reluctant to undertake non-specialist occupations for the sake of employment.[56] In light of the potential for future large-scale amphibious operations in this theatre, however, the disbandment or transfer of such units was not an option, and they, like the SRU in Britain, were thus prescribed more 'imaginative training' so as to retain their standard and keep them occupied until more suitable tasks opened up.[57]

There remains, however, a world of difference between small maritime special forces and large commando formations like the FSSF being left idle for extended periods. The forty men of the SRU, for example, could be withheld from deployment without being a significant drain on resources and manpower and without hard-up commanders looking to use them; yet to have withheld the deployment of 2,500 first-rate men of the FSSF for any period of time would have been widely impracticable. Despite this, with pressing exigencies and no opportunity for niche deployment on the horizon, the use of special forces with very specific roles, in alternate, but related, occupations could also be of value. For example MU Group No.1 (also known as Group 'A') that had trained in Nassau with the SRU in an offensive-orientated combat swimmer role, was sent to Hawaii in June 1944 and asked to perform a rubber-boat beach reconnaissance of Saipan. Although the Group's commander, Lieutenant Choate, objected to the task

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[54] Wright, pp.71-77
[55] CCO brief on Special Parties in SEAC, October 1944, DEFE 2/1035; Major-General G.E. Wildman-Lushington, SEAC to CCO, 19 June 1944, DEFE 2/1203
[56] Lieutenant-Commander A.G. Atwater, Chief MU to Colonel Bigelow, Washington, 26 May 1945, RG 226, Entry 92, Box 491; Folder 16; Major Alfred M. Lichtman, Area Operations Officer, MU, Washington to Colonel Richard F. Heppner, G-3, USAFCBI, 17 October 1944, RG 226, Entry 92, Box 491; Folder 15
[57] SACSEA Staff Meeting, 10 February 1944, WO 203/4796

stating it was 'unfair to use us to carry out this operation', his objections were, however, quite reasonably overruled.[58] At this time in the Central Pacific there was a shortage of personnel capable of undertaking such roles, and the Group's spccialisation remained applicable to the task being asked of them. Furthermore, it was very unlikely that the Group would have had opportunity to carry out its original offensive swimming mandate in this theatre at that time.

The effective deployment of the smaller and more 'niche' formations was certainly hindered by the lack of knowledge about their precise speciality. It was a problem exacerbated by the degree of secrecy, both inevitable and enforced, that surrounded a number of these units. For example, in early-1943 Mountbatten released a paper to theatre commanders on the organisation and function of the COPPs to help educate them in their employment,[59] it transpired later, however, that this 'TOP SECRET and PERSONAL' document was not circulated beyond the Commanders-in-Chiefs to whom it was addressed 'with the result that planning staffs were not given a clear idea of what a COPP could do'.[60] Although developing command structures certainly helped to educate higher commanders in the potentials of specialist formations, their efforts could still thwarted by the needs of secrecy and security. Colonel Tollemache, CO SOG believed that these needs led to the 'quite straightforward work [of SOG] being considered as "Black Art" not only by the units themselves, but also by the staffs of the regular formations who could best make use of them.'[61] Such problems could be further aggravated by the nomenclature of units and their, on occasions, taking deliberately innocuous names for cover. One can hardly blame poorly informed commanders wishing to use the Special *Air* Service in a conventional airborne role; the Alamo Scouts for tactical reconnaissance; wondering what possible utility a Long Range *Desert* Group could have in the mountains and coastlines of Italy or Greece; let alone trying to fathom what the Royal Marine Boom Patrol Detachment could be used for.

Disuse was not always a conscious decision, however, and the correct employment of specialist elements required both opportunity and means. Material considerations could

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[58] Lieutenant Dennis Roberts, Chief MU Washington to Donovan, 21 July 1944, RG 226, Entry 139, Box 73; Folder 73
[59] Mountbatten to Army Commanders-in-Chiefs, 2 August 1943, DEFE 2/1116
[60] History of COPPs, 1942-45, DEFE 2/1116
[61] Colonel Tollemache, 'Report on lessons learnt from formation of SOG', 1 October 1945, DEFE 2/1203

be a significant impediment. Most clearly, aircraft and shipping had to be available in sufficient quantity to facilitate insertion and exfiltration, as well as supply and reinforcement. Early Commando operations, from both Britain and in the Mediterranean, and later operations in the Far East, were often hamstrung and confined to a small scale by an absence of landing craft and supporting shipping (or the unwillingness to risk their loss).[62] Such shortages could hinder even minor raids, as was found by both the SSRF in 1942, and the MU throughout 1944.[63] Competition for resources obviously increased with the commencement of larger operations. The invasion of France, in particular, saw the Jedburghs, OGs and SAS Brigade all facing competition for dispatch and supply operations from the limited numbers of aircraft available.[64] Despite having the declared role of being a 'strategic reserve' to be used subsequent to, and in support of, the main invasions, many of these formations believed that they were committed too late, believing that the delay in their dispatch (which could be up to two-and-a-half months after the invasion) was a clear impediment to their effectiveness. The clearest reasons for these delays were material shortages in 'lift'; poor weather conditions; political considerations; unimaginative tasking; and as was noted previously, the lack of a unified control system for the disparate groups.[65]

Many of those groups dropped into France as late as August 1944 (particularly those in support of Anvil/Dragoon) never had time to adequately perform the role for which they had trained before being overrun by advancing Allied forces. Subsequently, many remained adamant that they would have achieved more had they been sent earlier. Jedburgh Team 'Cecil', for example, deployed on 25 August to the Aube area, concluded that 'we feel it was greatly to be regretted that a very good job was prevented from being an even better one by the failure to send us on, or even before D-Day, by which time we were already fully trained and prepared'.[66] Major H.N. Marten, CO Jedburgh Team 'Veganin' concurred, stated that the timing of deployment

> .... has been probably the most criminal matter in the whole history of the Jeds. .... for some reason the majority of the teams were left waiting until the very last moment before they were sent in and it was impossible for them to do any

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[62] Minutes of COS Meeting, 8 June 1943, WO 106/4117
[63] CCO to Admiral Hughes-Hallett, 14 January 1943, DEFE 2/957
[64] Warner (1986), p.145
[65] Memorandum of 'HQ Airtps', 28 December 1944, WO 219/2877; Funk (1992), pp.73-74
[66] Team 'Cecil' Reports, 'Jedburgh Team Chronologies', RG 226, Entry 190, Box 740; Folder 1463

> good whatsoever. .... It was a lamentable appreciation by the higher authorities to delay this departure.[67]

Similar claims were made by the OGs, Major Alfred T. Cox commanding the OGs in the South of France stated that: 'All are in unanimous agreement that the teams should have been put into FRANCE much earlier than they were. Everyday spent training the Maquis brought increased dividends in their combat effectiveness'.[68] General Browning, GOC Airborne Corps would support this opinion when he stated that the 'last minute distribution of arms only results in badly trained MAQUIS taking part in actions and being more nuisance than they are worth'.[69]

Even those Groups dropped earlier were prone to suggest that they would have been better employed up to three months before the invasion of France. Lieutenant William H. McKenzie III, commanding OG 'Louise' believed his operation should have been 'laid on during March' as they could 'have played a greater part in training and organising Maquis'.[70] Roger Ford's later historical appraisal of the Jedburghs shares such perceptions, stating that if the Jedburgh's had an 'operational flaw, it was the decision ... not to insert at least some of them before the invasion got underway'.[71] Such comments, easy with hindsight, are, nevertheless, still not necessarily correct. It should not be overlooked that, as SOE's history of the Jedburghs reminds,

> .... the Jedburgh Teams [and OGs] formed part of an operational reserve of trained personnel. Where the work of interfering with rail and telecommunications could be carried out by existing Resistance Groups, there was nothing to be gained in committing this reserve. On the other hand, there was good deal to be lost by encouraging clandestine Resistance to take overt action before the time was ripe, inviting heavy repressive action from the enemy in areas it was vital to him to control, and risking the breakup of the Resistance Groups.[72]

Although delayed, these formations were not misused; the situation on the ground had to be ripe for the committal of such groups. The dispatch of special forces before the commencement of the invasion would have been costly, they would likely have

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[67] Major Marten, 'Report on Jedburghs (Zone Sud)', 6 October 1944, RG 226, Entry 154, Box 56; Folder 945
[68] Major Alfred T. Cox in 'History of [OG] Operations in Southern France', 20 September 1944, RG 226, Entry 143, Box 11
[69] Lieutenant-General Browning to SHAEF, 17 November 1944, WO 205/92
[70] Lieutenant McKenzie III in 'History of [OG] Operations in Southern France', *op. cit.*
[71] Ford (2004), pp.29-30
[72] SOE's 'History of Jedburghs in Europe', HS 7/18 p.11

achieved little and, if detected, risked compromising resistance groups and invasion schemes alike. Despite this, in alternative theatres where the enemy was less dense and terrain more favourable, early dispatch does seem to have been beneficial, those Jedburghs later deployed to Burma, for instance, considered that they were more effective precisely because they had more time to operate.[73] It should be noted, however, that Burma was an active theatre when these teams were dispatched, and thus much of the complications that prevented dispatch before the invasion of France did not apply.

In a similar vein, although those later actions of the SAS Brigade in northwest Europe (which were more akin to a conventional reconnaissance force) have been criticised for being a misuse of a 'strategic' force in a 'tactical' role, this employment, in light of the rapidity of the Allied advance, remained the best use of the SAS at that time. Any 'traditional' SAS role in depth (presuming it could be planned and mounted in time) would have been impracticable and it was believed 'doubtful' that operations mounted with no resistance elements in place, and an assumed 100 percent hostile population in German regions, would have achieved results commensurate with casualties. Such operations would likely have been a waste of resources and merely served as a diversion from the main effort.[74] The possible exception, however, would have been to have made use of these units during operation 'Market Garden' in which they could have furthered the advance of XXX Corps or harassed German counterattacks on beleaguered airborne units.[75] On the whole, however, at this late stage of the war to have deployed the SAS in the 'strategic' role in depth, for which they had lobbied for some time, would have been a grave misuse; whilst tactical deployment, so often derided, became the only option lest the SAS face disuse or disbandment.

The spectre of disbandment, or disuse, was a threatening proposition for irregular warriors who, in frustration, were prone to consent, albeit often reluctantly, to almost any task so as to retain their *esprit de corps* and justify their existence to sceptical superiors. Specialist forces were, as Eric Morris states, 'vulnerable to a form of moral blackmail which meant they took on tasks and missions which they were singularly ill-

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[73] Thompson (1998), p.414
[74] HQ SAS Brigade meeting, 19 November 1944, WO 218/189
[75] Major-General R.N. Gale, Commander, 1 British Airborne Corps to GOC, First Allied Airborne Army, 18 January 1945, WO 219/2877

equipped to handle'.[76] In fighting for a permanent establishment for his Rangers, Darby for example, was unwilling to take too firm a stance against the misapplication of his force lest he denigrate his arguments about their flexibility and value, and thus actually hasten the disbandment of his command.[77] Similarly illustrative of these pressures is 'L' Detachment SAS's first disastrous operation against the Tmimi/Gazala airfields, which was mounted despite indications that atrocious weather would make successful parachute drops impossible. Stirling was, however, conscious that if the operation was called off it would not only invalidate his sentiments about the flexibility of the SAS idea (which he had sold on the very basis of the constant cancellation of Commando operations in theatre), but would also give his detractors the opportunity 'to pervert the reasoning for calling off the job and use it as a lever either to have the force disbanded or to make life even more difficult subsequently'.[78]

Once units had had successes such pressures could actually increase leading to the expectation of repeated results. Perhaps it was in such a vein that Stirling, conceivably with an eye to gaining a regimental establishment, agreed to take part in the costly raid on Benghazi, an operation that he would later claim, sinned against every principle of the SAS.[79] Later still, with the desire to guarantee the SAS a role in future campaigns, Stirling also pushed his unit hard in operations ahead of Eighth Army into Tunisia which, in light of more difficult terrain, hostile Arabs, and a more concentrated enemy, were more costly and ultimately led to his own capture. Similar pressures 'to keep the SAS on active service' propelled them to, much later, accept the role of performing tactical reconnaissance for 21 Army Group's advance into Germany.[80] Such demands were, in the words of Thompson,

> .... a hazard which faces all 'special' troops, who by their temperament usually hanker after action. As an advance nears its objective, the amount of suitable 'real estate' available for behind the lines operations may be reduced. So the special troops in question will be tempted to take whatever roles, or targets, are on offer. To have left such skilled troops sitting on the sidelines in an advance, where reconnaissance is always at a premium, would have been unthinkable; nor would the SAS have wanted this.[81]

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[76] Morris (1989), p.xvi in Introduction
[77] Hogan, *Raiders*, p.18
[78] Hoe, pp.94-95
[79] *Ibid.*, p.194
[80] Windmill, p.259
[81] Thompson (1998), p.334

Towards the end of the war, in spite of better command mechanisms and staff practices, there remained a definite prospect of misuse occurring because of an often mutual (consumer and practitioner) desire to keep these formations employed, almost regardless of circumstances, so as to reap the benefit of their training. In March 1945 the NORSO group (formerly Norwegian OGs), finally able to operate in Norway, mounted operation 'Rype' to target bridges and disrupt German rail communications. The mission, although achieving its goals, was costly: horrendous weather and inexperienced aircrews caused one aircraft transporting elements of the group to crash into a mountain with the loss of all on board, and another to mistakenly drop its personnel into Sweden. Lieutenant-Colonel Leflesen, of the OSS planning staff, commented that in this regard the NORSO mission 'represents a sad chapter in the history of our activity, one which I am constrained to add might have been avoided'.[82] Although a comparison could be drawn to 'L' Detachment's first operation, also costly in men and machines but not successful, the SAS operation, taken in the desperate days of the 'Crusader' offensive was, perhaps, a risk worth taking. 'Rype' however, although technically successful, did not warrant the risks and the loss of such trained and experienced men in the destruction of non-valuable assets in a strategic backwater at this late stage of the war. It is indicative of waste, and of deployment for the sake of employment.

It is clear, therefore, that throughout the course of the Second World War the experiences of the Anglo-American specialist formations could be quite mixed. Although often created with a specific role or speciality in mind, many would, at least at some point, either find themselves employed in circumstances, or undertaking roles, for which they were not prepared; or, alternatively, would be withheld from deployment for protracted periods of time. The 'correct' use of irregular formations had broad requirements which assumed the existence of informed consumers and practitioners that make logical and far-sighted decisions; as well as both the opportunity and means for their employment. In an evolving military situation with the absence of clear doctrines and precedents for the use of specialist formations the chances of their misapplication and misuse is made more likely.

Definition of misuse requires a rigid definition of role, something that was far from prevalent amongst many specialist formations of the Second World War. To remain

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[82] OSS/London War Diaries, Vol.8, KCLMA MF 209

employed, and be of use, specialist formations had to continually adapt and evolve their role to the requirements on the ground, and charges of misuse were often a counterpart to such transitions of role. When a conversion of role first occurred it could be viewed as an abhorrent misuse, but, in time, when the units adapted, what was once wrong could subsequently become perceived as normal. For example, the first time the Commandos faced conventional or protracted deployments in North Africa they were ill-prepared and suffered accordingly, with claims of misuse soon following; yet with their transition in role and alterations to their organisation and establishment, their future deployments in Italy or Northwest Europe in 'shock troop' and 'seize-and-hold' operations were conducted as part of the Commando repertoire without anywhere near as much negative comment.

To remain viable and useful, and not subvert their inherent value of being cost-effective (of potentially providing greater result than was the sum of their investment) specialist formations had to remain employed. They had to remain subservient to the necessities and course of the war as a whole. Operational necessity could pervert the ability for specialist formations (particularly of the commando variety) to deploy in the manner for which they had prepared, and there was an oft repeated propensity to thrust available units into the breach whenever necessary to help stem battlefield reverses. Commanders under pressure, who had neither been adequately briefed about the employment of specialist assets, nor had little appreciation of the 'cost' of raising and training these elements, were particularly prone to act as such, moves that although often costly and not cost-effective (as will be discussed in a later chapter), were understandable and, at times, even excusable. Without relying on hindsight, there is great difficulty in actually condemning many of the instances in which specialist forces were misused in the Second World War.

Arguably more reprehensible than misapplication, however, was disuse: perpetually delaying the committal of specialist formations, waiting continuously for apposite circumstances, or holding out for a 'model mission' which, in an evolving situation, may never occur. The cost of training and equipping a force, not to mention the manpower tied up in their establishment, could represent a noticeable investment, and should there be no opportunity for it to deploy in the capacity as originally intended, any use of the force (as with the FSSF) was arguably preferable to holding potentially large formations in reserve in the hope that opportunities would arise for their use. For

special forces, however, as misuse is potentially far more threatening, disuse, even for prolonged periods, can be viewed as both more preferable and more excusable. Misapplication, misuse and disuse of specialist formations, must, therefore be viewed as an essential component of the broader learning curve regarding their employment over the course of the Second World War. Both because of the embryonic nature of specialist formations; the lack of understanding about their use; and, perhaps most importantly, the exigencies and requirements of total war, misuse was to be expected; and in evolutionary terms, cannot always be seen as having been counterproductive.

Chapter 6
The impact of specialist forces

In January 1981 M.R.D. Foot posed a refreshingly simple question: '*Was SOE any good?*' Concluding his analysis with an emphatic 'yes', Foot's article remains a relatively rare example of an attempt to contextualise the import of special operations on the course of the Second World War.[1] This chapter serves to modify Professor Foot's question, to ask: 'Were the Anglo-American commandos and special forces any good?' Focusing on what commandos and special forces achieved in the war, this chapter seeks to examine their impact in both independent action and in conjunction with other arms; it seeks to examine not only the direct, but also the intangible and more abstract, consequences of their deployments and to relate these to tactical, operational and strategic utility. This chapter is not, however, a breakdown of the impact, either qualitatively or quantitatively, of individual units and operations: any attempt to do so would prove exhaustive; instead it serves to illustrate themes by the use of specific examples.

There is inherent ambiguity in any attempt to determine the impact and value of any one element during the course of the war as a whole; and the fundamental problems with accurately determining impact need to be highlighted before the question of the value of specialist formations can begin to be addressed. Physical problems are the most obvious: problems that relate to a lack of clear information about costs, losses and results; that relate to divergences in claims, the lack of adequate reports, and an indeterminable chain of causation. Independent effect is seldom ascertainable. For example, an accurate 'tally' of the achievements of the SAS Brigade in France is coloured not only by the impact of other specialist formations (the OGs and Jedburghs), but also the impact of the Resistance, clandestine circuits, and the Allied air forces. Analytical problems are more complicated. There is definite difficulty in extrapolating the value of an individual tactical outcome to the course of the wider operation, campaign, or entire war. Whilst tangible results like the destruction of personnel or materials give some impression of value, ascribing to such isolated activities a margin of effect, or causational impact, upon later events, is, however, practically impossible. What impact, for instance, does the loss of a number of aircraft,

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[1] Foot, M.R.D., 'Was SOE Any Good?', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.16, No.1, (January 1981) pp.167-181

or the delay of enemy reinforcement, have on the course of a campaign? Even greater difficulty is seen in assessing the value of the myriad of intangible, but no less significant, effects of special operations. What, for example, was the value of COPP reconnaissances of beaches, or the import of UDT demolitions before a landing? Or, how valuable was intelligence provided by the Alamo Scouts or LRDG? How many lives were saved, how much faster was success achieved by special forces aiding or facilitating conventional deployments?

Underlying this chapter is the expectation of the provision of strategic utility, that is to say, effects that shape the course and object of the conflict as a whole. Although it is certainly possible for specialist formations to reap, both actively and passively, strategic benefit (although never decisively so in high-intensity conflict); their means, methods and tradecraft, remain tactical. This apparent dichotomy between tactical means and strategic impact is a source of confusion; resulting, at times, in both an underestimation and an inflation of the value of specialist forces and operations. In their own words most Second World War practitioners of special operations viewed themselves as 'strategic' troops. This perception was, however, principally a result of the depth at which they operated, the duration of their deployment, or the fact that they were commanded at the GHQ-level; rather than being in reference to their utility or effectiveness of their operations. The perception of special forces as being wholly strategic actors tends to lead both to a condemnation of 'tactical' employment and, as has been noted in the previous chapter, to the erroneous impression that their use 'as close adjuncts to conventional military efforts ... [was] an abuse or waste of their unique capabilities'.[2] Independence of operation was seen as the gold standard, yet to decry operations alongside, or in support of, the conventional battle is not only fallacious but also neglects some of their clearest claims of strategic utility. Gray accordingly believes that '.... the notion that there is an inherent distinction between strategic and tactical missions is both false and counterproductive.'[3] Special operations have the potential for a degree of impact at all levels of war; they 'may have strategic value whether they are intended to have immediate effects on a battle, on a campaign, or on a war as a whole. .... Moreover, special operations have strategic value whether

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[2] Gray (1996), p.148
[3] *Ibid.*, p.148

one uses them on independent missions or whether they coordinate their action with regular forces'.[4]

Independent offensive action, typified in the raid, tends to dominate discussion of the impact of special operations. Yet individual raids by both commandos and special forces taken in isolation, totally disconnected from the actions of conventional arms, had little impact on the Second World War. These operations were often self-declared 'pinpricks' which served, as in the initial conception of the Commandos, not so much to cause material attrition as to strengthen national resolve, regain the initiative, gain experience and frustrate the enemy. Early examples of the raid (from both Britain and the Middle East) were amateurish in conception, of a small-scale, and invariably unsuccessful; and in general would have little inherent military value in terms of material impact. Despite growing proficiencies and a concomitant increase in the likelihood of cost-effective attrition later in the war, this contention still remained largely applicable to individual raids taken in isolation.

Not all raids, however, were conducted on a small-scale, and a number of commando operations were undertaken with loftier expectations. Solid example is the bold Commando raid on St. Nazaire in March 1942. The motivation behind 'Chariot' was ostensibly strategic in character: to destroy the dry docks of St. Nazaire to deny their use to the *Tirpitz* and so alter the course of the Battle of the Atlantic. Churchill would call the raid 'a deed of glory intimately involved in high strategy'.[5] Although the raid was costly, it was undeniably a great success, succeeding in its primary purpose rendering the Normandie dock inoperable for the remainder of the war. With hindsight, however, the raid cannot be seen to have had any significant strategic utility. By 1942 Hitler had no intention of risking his remaining large surface vessels in the Atlantic nor would the denial of the maintenance facilities at St. Nazaire preclude the *Tirpitz* from operating in the North Sea against convoys bound for Russia. Resultantly, Gray sees the raid as 'a heroic example of doing the wrong thing well for the right reason. The raid was a critical blow against the German naval strategy of 1940-41, not of 1942-45'.[6] McRaven has stated categorically that the risks taken were not worth the potential gains, and contrasts it unfavourably with the later X-Craft submersible attack on the

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[4] *Ibid.*, p.165
[5] Churchill, Winston S., *The Second World War – Volume IV: The Hinge of Fate*, (Cassell: London, 1951) p.106
[6] Gray (1996), p.142

Tirpitz, operation 'Source' of September 1943, which rendered the ship inoperable with far fewer losses.[7]

Potentially the most directly 'strategic' independent special operation carried out in the war was 'Swallow/Gunnerside', an SOE-sponsored operation conducted in February 1943 against the Vemork hydroelectric plant in Norway, a target significant because of its heavy water by-product (an essential moderating component in the establishment of a nuclear reactor). Arrangements for the mission first occurred in September 1942 when four SOE-recruited Norwegians, 'Grouse', were parachuted into the vicinity of the plant to provide advance reconnaissance and act as guides for 'Freshman', a demolitions force of thirty Royal Engineers which were to sent by glider to attack the target in November. Whilst 'Grouse' went to plan, the 'Freshman' gliders crashed upon approach, those that survived were captured and subsequently executed by the Germans. 'Grouse', however, remained in position, and in February 1943 'Gunnerside', a force of six SOE-Norwegians, was parachuted in as a second strike group to meet with 'Swallow' (as the 'Grouse' group was renamed).[8] These groups combined and subsequently successfully attacked the plant to place it out of action for a number of months. The resultant denial of heavy water production thus went at least some way to preventing German experimentation with atomic devices. Considering the obvious ramifications had these been developed, David Stafford believed this 'may have been the most important act of sabotage by either side during the Second World War'.[9] Illustrative of the problems with ascribing credit to a chain of causation, however, is the fact that the German failure to develop atomic weapons had more to do with the lack of heavy water alone; as well and the fact that 'Gunnerside' did not permanently stop the plant: credit must also be shared with both a February 1944 SOE mission whereby two Norwegians sunk, via sabotage, a ferry transporting half-a-year's heavy water production from the newly repaired plant, and with the USAAF, whose raids would keep the plant inoperable.[10]

On the whole, however, independently strategic special operations were the exception and not the rule. Despite often being perceived as the gold standard, few special operations had the potential for independent strategic effect in a conflict the magnitude

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[7] McRaven, pp.43; 230
[8] Cookridge, E.H., *Inside SOE*, (Arthur Barker: London, 1966) pp.516-524
[9] Stafford (2000), p.298
[10] Cookridge, p.524

of the Second World War. The much more pronounced contribution that special operations made to the strategic situation came when their actions, however individually insignificant, were wedded to the activities of conventional formations and the main campaign. The value of specialist formations acting in a contributory role in facilitating, enhancing, or aiding the development and continuation of conventional operations is potentially much more significant than any independent and self-contained operations that are divorced from the deployment of conventional arms except in the more abstract sense. As General Thompson has stated, 'offensive action and intelligence gathering, produce the best "return" when carried out as adjuncts of the campaign, or battle, being fought or about to be fought, by the main body of the army. There are few examples of offensive action far removed from main force activity producing a good "return".'[11] Through examination of these more direct contributions, the most substantial tangible value of special operations can be seen. As Gray contends, the strategic utility of special operations 'depends on the context of war as a whole' and 'corresponds to the significance of the grander-scale military operations that they assist'.[12] In the opinion of Kiras, the true strategic value of special operations is not in one annihilatory action that achieves strategic paralysis, but in collective strategic attrition, to weaken 'an adversary's combat power and will to fight'.[13]

It is only when raids are taken as a whole that their value becomes more apparent: based on quantity rather than quality the cumulative effects of these operations could be greater than the sum of their parts. Small-scale raids, often repeated, could produce a very favourable return on investment capable of causing cause clear, albeit localised, damage to the enemy war effort. This is a point well illustrated by the prolific, and often tactically successful, small-scale raids of the SAS during the Desert War. The most feted achievement of which, and potentially their most significant achievement during the entire the war, was their destruction of an estimated 350 enemy aircraft throughout the campaign.[14] This achievement was undoubtedly significant and greatly aided the beleaguered Desert Air Force by materially helping 'to tilt the balance of air

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[11] Thompson (1998), p.7
[12] Gray (1996), pp.148-149
[13] Kiras, p.61
[14] The significance of this achievement is illustrated by the Axis aircraft strengths in North Africa: in June 1942 it was estimated that there were a total of 183 German and 248 Italian frontline aircraft in the North African theatre, a figure which rose to 375 and 283 aircraft respectively in November 1942. Ellis, John, *The World War II Databook*, (Aurum: London, 2003) p.232

power in the Mediterranean Theatre'.[15] GHQ MEF was of the opinion that the SAS achievements throughout the North African campaign 'had a great bearing on the final defeat of the enemy in Tunisia'.[16] Even Erwin Rommel would acknowledge their contribution, writing in his diary that the SAS 'caused us more damage than any other British unit of equal strength'.[17] Whilst it is certainly clear that special operations by the likes of the SAS and LRDG in the desert were of clear value in aiding the course of the wider campaign, their achievements should be kept in perspective. They were not, as Morgan has contended, 'a phenomenal and decisive contribution to the overall victory'.[18] These actions were not decisive acts, but ancillary and contributory events to the course and conduct of the main campaign.

For the conventional arms, the most beneficial results which special forces and partisans undertaking harassment and interdiction activities in the enemy's rear could achieve was not with material destruction, but instead in the disruption of enemy lines of communication and logistics: performing strikes on targets which negatively affected the enemy's speed of response and ability to manoeuvre. Although there were numerous instances in which special operations were able (with varying levels of success) to attain such a result, one of the more notable, and indeed contested, examples is the value of the SAS 'Bulbasket' base in disrupting the arrival of German reinforcements to the Normandy beachhead. As a case study it emphasises not only the potential value of special operations in this regard, but also highlights some of the difficulties of assessing the impact of one event to a broader chain of causation.

Max Hastings has attributed to 'Bulbasket' part of the credit for the delay of the SS *Das Reich* Division reaching the Normandy beachhead. Although the Division was delayed significantly by crippled rail networks (caused by airpower and Resistance sabotage) as well as the constant spectre of Allied aerial supremacy preventing daytime movements, Hastings claims that SAS attacks on rail links, ambushes and crucially, their tasking of an air strike against a petrol dump at Châtellerault, where the fuel reserves for *Das Reich* was stored, delayed their arrival at the front for upwards of two or three days of their longer hold up.[19] Even if the SAS part in the delay was a matter

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[15] Thompson (1998), p.420; David Stirling, 'Origins of the SAS Regiment', 8 November 1948, KCLMA McLeod
[16] GHQ MEF, Brief history of 'L' Detachment SAS Brigade and 1st SAS Regiment, WO 201/721
[17] Liddell Hart, B.H. (ed.), *The Rommel Papers*, (Collins: London, 1953) p.393
[18] Morgan (2000), pp.14-15
[19] Hastings, Max, p.187

of hours, waylaying such an important division from the Normandy battlefield was significant. Thompson has thus contended that the SAS actions 'more than compensated for the [subsequent] virtual elimination of the Bulbasket Team'.[20] Roger Ford, on the other hand, attributes *Das Reich*'s delay principally to the Resistance, and argues that it is 'difficult to rate it [Bulbasket] as more than a partial success, not only because so many lives were lost in its course and it had to be brought to a premature conclusion as a result, but also because it actually achieved very little in purely military terms'.[21] Furthermore, Ford discounts the significance of *Das Reich*'s delay, emphasising that when the division did arrive in Normandy it was not committed immediately, but was instead held in reserve until early July.[22] Ford's criticisms are, however, somewhat misplaced. He overlooks both that it was the SAS who directed the strike at Châtellerault and the point that the lateness of *Das Reich*'s committal to the line at Normandy was not necessarily by choice, but was a necessity because of the disorganised state in which the division had finally arrived at the front.

As a general rule, the use of commando and ranger formations in conjunction with, or in support of, conventional arms would ultimately prove to be of more value than their independent raiding activities; a fact which of course underlines their evolution in role. Their ultimate occupation as spearheaders, flank guards and shock troops were all intended to facilitate, or accelerate the pace of, conventional military operations. They, as a post-Sicily appraisal stated, 'assist in keeping the battle in a state of fluidity'.[23] Their greatest usefulness, and the *raison d'être* of many commando and ranger formations after 1942, occurred when 'they came to fight within the larger framework of the big invasions ... when their place was in the vanguard of the vanguards and on the outer wings of the beachheads'.[24] The presence of specially trained and motivated troops on the beaches during, or soon after, the initial assault certainly went some way to overcoming the daunting problems of mounting amphibious operations. Their value in such a capacity is evidenced by the regular proliferation and expansion of these formations in the period in 1942-1944 to cater for the expected requirements of ever-larger amphibious operations.

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[20] Thompson (1998), p.308
[21] Ford (2003), pp.75-76
[22] *Ibid.*, p.56
[23] War Office memorandum, 'Points brought out in Ops. "Husky"', WO 201/799
[24] Vagts, Alfred, *Landing Operations*, (Military Service Publishing Company: Washington D.C., 1946) p.629

In addition to their value in an amphibious capacity, commando formations also displayed their utility in a number of valuable overland deployments where, via infiltration and assault, they helped hasten the development of the conventional battle by the seizure of important objectives. Three solid, although by no means exclusive, examples of commando-type formations proving valuable in such capacity are: the FSSF's assaults on Monte la Difensa and Monte la Remetanea, the capture of which helped crack the 'Winter Wall' and increased the tempo of the main battle. The Marauder's seizure of Myitkyina airfield in Burma with Chinese regulars, an action that helped open the Burma Road and, by removing Japanese fighter cover over northern Burma, ensured that flights over the 'Hump' were shorter and safer. And, the Commando's seizure of Hill 170 in the Arakan, a stroke which would greatly aid the advance of the 25th Indian Division towards Kangaw. Such examples, in addition to those amphibious strokes, such as Termoli or Pointe du Hoc, greatly facilitated operational level manoeuvre and helped speed up the pace of the conventional battle; yet even those very successful operations cannot be considered, as Hogan erroneously claims, to be 'critical to the success of conventional forces'.[25]

Although offensive activities tend to dominate much 'special operations literature' it is equally important to examine the results of their intelligence activities. Yet doing so is not without its complications, as John Ferris states, 'one rarely has the equivalent of a laboratory experiment in which all other variables remain constant and one can gauge with precision the effect of changes in intelligence'.[26] The contribution of special forces to the intelligence picture should not be underestimated. In the opinion of LRDG patrol commander Anthony Timpson, the timely provision of intelligence and information was 'the most decisive influence which the LRDG could exert'.[27] If the SAS contributed to victory in the Desert War by their regular harassment of enemy lines of communication and their destruction of aircraft, the LRDG easily matched their contribution with their invaluable provision of topographical and human intelligence.

The LRDG 'road watch', in particular, has often been hailed as an activity of particular value. By physically charting all east- and west-bound traffic along the arterial coastal

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[25] Hogan, *US Army*, p.32
[26] Ferris, John 'The Intelligence-Deception Complex – an Anatomy', *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol.14, No.4, (October 1989), p.731
[27] Timpson and Gibson-Watt, p.17

roads, the LRDG helped build up an exceptionally detailed and therefore valuable picture of the supply and reinforcement situation of the Axis forces. Brigadier T.S. Airey, DMI, GHQ MEF, believed the road watch to be of 'quite exceptional importance' that provided

> .... an indispensable basis for certain facts on which calculation of enemy strength can be based. Without their reports we should frequently have been in doubt as to the enemy's intentions, when knowledge of them was all important; and our estimate of enemy strength would have been far less accurate and accepted with far less confidence.[28]

The intelligence contribution of the 'road watch' was initially heralded as having been decisive; Constable, for example, recounts that: 'When Ritter von Thoma, Rommel's deputy, was captured ... the German general was shocked to learn that Monty knew more about the supply status of the *Afrika Korps* than he did. Most of this information reached Monty via LRDG road watch patrols'.[29] Their contribution must now, however, be viewed against the value of intelligence from other sources and, put against the significance of the contribution of signals intelligence, notably 'Y' Service intercepts and 'Ultra' decrypts which were undoubtedly the greatest intelligence source available to Western Desert Force/ Eighth Army, the contribution of the LRDG is put in better perspective.

Despite the fact that the LRDG did not produce the range of information that signals intelligence did, it did have a number of benefits over other available intelligence mediums. Signals intelligence sources were not without their limitations: 'Ultra' was reliant on what was sent via Enigma and consequently could suffer from being patchy, delayed, as well as being prone to misinterpretation; whilst 'Y' Service was heavily reliant on suitable conditions for interception of signals and was often of value only to the tactical-level.[30] The 'road watches', however, offered a unique means of verifying intelligence gained from signals intelligence; as well as having the advantages of being proactive, regular, almost continuous and, in light of its well-trained practitioners, accurate.[31] LRDG patrols also provided a wonderful cover, a plausible source, to which 'Ultra' intercepts could be attributed.

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[28] Brigadier Airey, Notes on LRDG Road Watch, 14 December 1942, WO 201/771
[29] Constable, Trevor James, *Hidden Heroes*, (Arthur Barker: London, 1971) p.141
[30] Jenner, Robin; List, David and Badrocke, Mike, *The Long Range Desert Group 1940-1945*, (Osprey: Oxford, 1999) pp.35-36
[31] Kelly, p.187

Set against other forms of human intelligence in this theatre, the LRDG returns were particularly favourable. David Hunt, an GHQ MEF intelligence staff officer would claim that '.... all the agents' reports ever received through all the cumbrous and many-branched organisations set up for the purposes of espionage put together, never amounted to enough to be weighed in the balance against the information which the Long Range Desert Group supplied'.[32] Against photo-reconnaissance in depth too, the LRDG comes off favourably. Despite a growing proficiency in aerial reconnaissance in the later stages of the campaign, the RAF could never hope to match the range, time-on-target and completeness of intelligence that was attainable by LRDG patrols.

In the uniquely apposite conditions of the Desert War the LRDG was also of notable value to conventional operations serving in a guide and pathfinding capacity. Solid example of which is provided by the LRDG finding 'Wilders's Gap', allowing Eighth Army to circumvent the heavily defended Mareth Line during their advance into Tunisia. General Montgomery's commendation of the unit stated: 'Without your careful and reliable reports the launching of the "left hook" by the NZ Div would have been a leap in the dark; with the information they produced, the operation could be planned with some certainty and as you know, went off without a hitch.'[33] The results caused Eric Morris to call this discovery 'one of the most important contributions by Special Forces to the land battle in North Africa'.[34]

The closest US counterpart to the LRDG, in both broad *modus operandi* and in impact, was the Alamo Scouts. The combat record and tactical virtuosity of the Scouts is arguably without parallel. Throughout the course of their operations the Scouts are believed to have accounted for over 500 Japanese soldiers killed, and over sixty captured (a phenomenal feat in light of the rarity of Japanese prisoners), all without the loss of a single man.[35] It is not in these claims, however, that their value is to be found. The Scout's greatest contribution was their provision of intelligence for the benefit of the US Sixth Army in the South-West Pacific and the Philippines. Undertaking tactical reconnaissance, beach survey, liaison with partisans, pathfinding, as well as important road and coastal watches, the Scouts provided direct assistance for General Krueger's offensives and were an undeniable asset in his arsenal. With the establishment of a

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[32] Hunt, David, *A Don at War*, (Frank Cass: London, 1990) p.132
[33] General Montgomery to Lieutenant-Colonel Prendergast, CO LRDG, 2 April 1943, WO 201/816
[34] Morris (1989), p.153
[35] Zedric, p.251

'Special Intelligence Subsection' under Sixth Army's G-2 (Intelligence) Section, Krueger's staff benefited enormously from being able to task and dispatch a 'Scout team in any given area on Luzon within 48 hours' either to provide specific intelligence, or undertake a gamut of other tasks.[36] Krueger himself would later praise the tremendous value of having a reliable and readily-available reconnaissance asset at hand capable of producing a 'considerable volume of extremely valuable information'.[37]

Another fine example of special forces recouping intelligence returns is provided by OSS Detachment 101 in Burma. After an awkward first year, once the Detachment had become properly established, it was estimated that their extensive intelligence networks provided Stilwell 'with over ninety percent of the entire Japanese intelligence that they got in the [Northern Burma] area', and led to the designation of sixty-five percent of all air attacks mounted in theatre.[38] As the unit's commander, Colonel Peers, was keen to emphasise: 'Considering all of the numerous sources available to that command, including Chinese, British and American troops, prisoner of war interrogations, aerial photography and a wide variety of other sources, the magnitude of the 101 intelligence collection effort can be readily appreciated'.[39] Force 136, 'V' Force and SACO each recouped similar benefits in their respective areas of operation, but none would not quite parallel the expansive successes of Detachment 101 in this regard.

Not all intelligence advances attained by specialist formations came from the conduct of clandestine activities, however, and, at times, valuable intelligence was gained as a result of conducting offensive operations (indeed No.30 Commando were created with this specific intention in mind). Good example of an offensive raid conducted for intelligence purposes was the February 1942 operation 'Biting' by C Company, 2nd Parachute Battalion: the raid on Bruneval to secure German radar technology.[40] The successful seizure of which, as claimed by R.V. Jones, gave 'first-hand knowledge of the state of German radar technology, in the form in which it was almost certainly

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[36] See: RG 338, Records of Sixth Army G-2 Section, Box 7
[37] Krueger, p.189
[38] Colonel Peers on 'Detachment 101 ATB', RG 226, Entry 161, Box 8; Folder 86; Hogan (1995), p.111
[39] Peers and Brelis, p.184
[40] Millar, George, *The Bruneval Raid*, (Cassell: London, 2002)

being applied in our principal objective, the German nightfighter control system.'[41] The most startling intelligence benefit accrued from an offensive raid, however, occurred during operation 'Claymore', the first Lofotens raid, of March 1941. Tactically and materially the raid was very successful (although the men faced little fighting), yet its real strategic significance came in the seizure of ciphers, documents, and Enigma coding equipment; a haul which significantly aided the evolution of 'Ultra'.[42]

Arguably the most significant intelligence activities as performed by special forces were those directed at facilitating and advancing amphibious operations. Solid intelligence about hydrographics, beach gradients, enemy underwater and shoreline defences etc., cardinal requirements for the successful prosecution of large-scale amphibious landings, were often only obtainable through the use of units such as the COPPs and S&R teams. Thompson has claimed that the work of these units 'was absolutely indispensable to the success of the amphibious operations carried out by the Allies, of which Normandy was the supreme example'.[43] Of perhaps equal significance were maritime special forces undertaking the tasks of beach clearance, demolitions, deception, and assault pilotage. Fine example of the value of such operations are seen with the UDT activities before the landings on Guam. Admiral Nimitz noted: 'Assault operations in the Marianas would have been far more difficult, if not almost impossible, on some beaches without the capable and courageous work of the Underwater Demolition Teams'.[44] It is difficult to assess the precise value of these activities, but the consequences of inadequate reconnaissance, pilotage and other pre-assault tasks had been displayed all too clearly at, for example, Dieppe or Tarawa. Without such benefits as accrued by the use of special maritime groups, many large-scale landings could have been a significant gamble, and a greater number of casualties would likely have been sustained in their mounting. The activities of these formations, if not crucial to success, at times certainly hastened events and saved lives during some of the most difficult of all military manoeuvres.

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[41] Jones, R.V., *Most Secret War*, (Hodder and Stoughton: London, 1979) p.316
[42] Brigadier Haydon, Report on 'Claymore', 13 March 1941, DEFE 2/54; and WO 231/2; Durnford-Slater, p.54; Weale, p.65
[43] Thompson (1998), p.420
[44] Admiral Nimitz to Admiral King, 22 August 1944, RG 38, World War II Action and Operational Reports, Box 789

It was not, however, only in their actions against the enemy that specialist formations had value. They were also of notable significance in the development of new techniques, doctrines and equipment. Commando amphibious raids permitted the gaining of experience which could be translated into valuable lessons and doctrinal advances in amphibious operations, small unit battle tactics and equipment etc.. James Dunning, a wartime member of No.4 Commando and an instructor at the Commando Training Centre would, for example, contend that the Commando role in developing 'new and innovative standards in military training' proved that 'the benefits and value of the Commandos went beyond the limits of their operation'.[45]

Early Commando raids were certainly of value in ironing out some of the problems inherent to the planning and conduct of amphibious operations. The COHQ staff practices and inter-service co-operation that had developed during the Lofotens and Vaagso raids, not to mention the more obvious example of Dieppe, all established precedents and mechanisms that were invaluable in future amphibious assaults.[46] It should be noted, however, that much of the experience gained in raiding operations was of a very specific nature with little general application. Lewis has gone as far as suggesting that because 'British experiences in amphibious raids were not directly applicable to large-scale joint amphibious operations' they may have actually 'hampered their ability to develop an effective tactical and operational amphibious doctrine' giving them false estimations about the value of surprise and mobility over the benefits of mass and firepower.[47]

The principal occupation of a number of special forces was to provide training, 'stiffening' and leadership to indigenous partisan movements. In order to examine the impact of these activities it is necessary to briefly consider the efficiency of the wider partisan movements which they assisted. Whilst any cumulative analysis of the value of resistance movements is greatly complicated by a myriad of different military, political, geographical and chronological variables as effecting each individual movement, it is broadly possible to surmise, however, that almost universally their value increased in proportion to their proximity, in both time and space, to conventional Allied operations. Although a contentious subject, Thompson is right to

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[45] Dunning, James, *The Fighting Forth*, (Sutton: Gloucestershire, 2003) p.57
[46] Major-General Haydon to Captain J.H. Devins, 13 February 1962, IWM Haydon 93/28/4; JCH 2/6
[47] Lewis, Adrian, p.40

emphasise the 'perfectly respectable point of view which argues that few, if any, resistance movements conducted successful overt military operations, unless operating in concert with a main, conventional force; even if that force was some distance away'.[48] Such a consideration is important: overt military operations by partisan formations had to either be in sufficient strength (as in Yugoslavia towards the end of the war) or had to occur in conjunction with main force operations, to have any chance of significant success and therefore impact. Without sufficient strength, organisation, and equipment, or a main force to distract the enemy, resistance formations were prone to expend their energies without significant return for the risk.

John Keegan in *The Second World War* is particularly scornful of achievements of SOE (and by association OSS), which he sees 'largely fails in its claim to have contributed significantly to Hitler's defeat'.[49] Keegan bases this contention on three very selective 'key events' of resistance warfare against Germany: the French Resistance (supported by Jedburghs) in Vercors on D-Day; the July 1944 Slovakia uprising; and the August 1944 Warsaw uprising. As each of these events ultimately resulted in brutal and effective suppression, Keegan is led to the conclusion that 'the programme of subversion, sabotage and resistance ... must be adjudged a costly and misguided failure'.[50] The brevity and selectivity of such a narrow assessment does not, however, suffice and it ignores the cumulative effects of partisan warfare on the enemy war effort.

It is certainly true that the use of partisans, sabotage and subversion never lived up to the idealistic rhetoric to 'set Europe ablaze' as first expounded in 1940. Fighting alone and reluctant to become embroiled in protracted land battles Britain was grasping at straws, they harboured naïve and unrealistic views about how the people of Europe could rise up and virtually liberate themselves from the shackles of Nazism with the minimum of British support. Whilst such a misguided perception arguably lasted longer than it should have, by 1942 Britain had begun to perceive partisan movements as the Americans had from the outset: as an ancillary bonus to conventional actions and not a war winning weapon. The merits of partisan and guerrilla movements should

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[48] Thompson (1998), p.8
[49] Keegan, John, *The Second World War*, (Hutchinson: London, 1989) p.495
[50] *Ibid.*, pp.484-485

thus be judged on this latter expectation and not on the adolescent view that they could be independently decisive.[51]

Irregular activities in support of the invasion of France provide clear illustration of the utility of partisans acting in support of the regular battle. Of particular note are the large-scale Resistance uprisings in Brittany, which, Casey has claimed, 'must rank among the most brilliant and successful of the war'.[52] Their effectiveness was, in no small part, magnified by the timely dispatch of various Jedburgh teams and a large number of (overwhelmingly French) SAS groups to the area. In Brittany the SAS and fourteen Jedburgh Teams managed to arm and organise over 20,000 resisters, whose actions were so successful in paralysing German forces that they were able to protect the flanks of Patton's encircling drive, allowing him to focus on the front, spare his own resources, and speed up his rate of advance.[53] SOE's verdict was that the Jedburgh's contribution, in conjunction with the Resistance and the SAS, 'saved the use of at least one Division in the Brittany campaign'.[54] Even the impact of just one three-man Jedburgh Team, able to orchestrate the timely delivery of Allied resources, could be significant. For example, Team 'Frederick' in a ten-week deployment in support of the SAS 'Samwest' base is claimed to have trained over 4,000 partisans in Brittany.[55] Resistance actions in support of the landings in the South of France, again aided by Jedburghs and OGs, were as equally well praised. General Patch, GOC Seventh Army, estimated that the contribution of the Resistance in support of 'Dragoon' as being 'the equivalent of four to five Divisions'; certainly no mean feat.[56]

The arrival of uniformed specialist troops, in advance of conventional arms, into occupied territories was an act that could alone be enough to cause spontaneous indigenous uprisings and an instant uplifting of morale. The French Resistance, for example, was 'intoxicated' by the sudden appearance of SAS, OG, or Jedburgh personnel in their territory. Their arrival, as Gaujac claims, 'was a harbinger of liberation and a call to action'.[57] An OSS appraisal of OG work in the south of France stated that their 'least tangible but probably most important' impact was the

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[51] Casey, p.69
[52] *Ibid.*, p.122
[53] Dear, p.188
[54] SOE's 'History of Jedburghs in Europe', HS 7/18 pp.4-5
[55] Summary of Jedburgh 'Frederick', HS 7/19
[56] SOE's 'History of Jedburghs in Europe', HS 7/18 p.9
[57] Macksey (1975), p.190; Gaujac, Paul, *Special Forces in the Invasion of France*, (Historic & Collections: Paris, 1999) p.401

'tremendous lift given to the Maquis .... Many French leaders have said that even if the men had not carried out a single tactical operation their presence alone was of enormous value.'[58] Any assessment of the value of special forces in such instances must, of course, also acknowledge the impact and efficiency of the clandestine circuits of SOE and OSS. The work done by these agencies in contacting, organising and preparing resistance elements prior to the committal of special forces was very important. For example, in the first six months of 1944, before any Jedburgh, OG or SAS element was committed to France, SOE and OSS had arranged that by D-Day, 'about twenty thousand resistance fighters were fully armed; another fifty thousand were armed "... in some degree".'[59]

Previous chapters have highlighted distinct limitations with the employment of large numbers of Allied special forces in support of the conventional Allied effort in France, and it is certainly worth asking whether these units could have been utilised for greater benefit. James Kiras has taken a narrow and critical view of the use of the SAS Brigade in France believing little of its actions amounted to strategic benefits. He believes that instead of it being used in a reactionary fashion (as a strategic reserve) undertaking an esoteric range of operations, the SAS and other irregular elements should have been used in a concerted and proactive manner deliberately targeting enemy supply arteries as soon as the invasion occurred. Expanding upon the oft repeated discussion of misuse which maintains that these units were committed too late, he adds that they were also committed against the wrong sort of targets. Kiras maintains:

> The inability of the Allies to conduct a campaign of unconventional attrition prior to and during the Normandy campaign was one of the greatest lost opportunities of the war: a severely weakened *Wehrmacht* might have been overwhelmed by the Allied and Soviet armies on both fronts as early as autumn of 1944.[60]

Such a statement presupposes many things, not least of all being the (quite fallacious) assumption that there was a widespread understanding about the possibilities of 'unconventional attrition' and of the role that special forces would occupy therein. Irregular warfare on the scale and depth of that to be conducted during the invasion of

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[58] OG Command, 'History of Operations in Southern France', 20 September 1944, RG 226, Entry 143, Box 11
[59] Asprey, p.318
[60] Kiras, pp.84-85

France was, in 1944, an entirely new proposition; a lack of knowledge about how this should be undertaken, and a corresponding reticence in some quarters about its potential, was, therefore, quite understandable. The limitations of SAS and OG deployments in Italy only five months before the commencement of operations in France illustrate that the 'learning curve' dictating their employment had not yet been properly mastered. With such limitations in mind, the orchestration and use of such a large number of Allied special forces groups (each burdened to some extent by problems resulting from a rapid expansion in establishment, the requirement to develop new methods and tactics, or simply from inexperience) in support of the invasion of France appears to be quite the achievement and highlights just how far the establishment and acceptance of these units had come by this stage.

The assumption that any worthwhile 'unconventional attrition' could have had occurred before the commencement of the invasion is equally erroneous. Until the mainstay of German forces were distracted by large-scale continental landings any irregular activities would have been easily suppressed. This was the precise reason that soon after the landings, once the beachhead had become unexpectedly static, SHAEF ordered a brief suspension of many Resistance activities, so as to ensure that a potentially valuable weapon for the benefit of the breakout was not spent prematurely. Whilst there were certainly problems with the control and tasking of these formations, and definite limitations with the flexibility of response following the rapidity of the Allied breakout, it is quite unwarranted, however, to engage in counterfactual and hindsight estimations that wrongly assume both that there was a rational and comprehensive construct of special operations in 1944 and that the means and resources (aircraft in particular) for application were all available. Kiras contended that:

> Had the SAS been used to sever some of the tendons of the *Westheer* and been part of an integrated team to run it to ground instead of attempting to demonstrate its own 'strategic' value and prepare for subsequent operations that never materialised, the war might very well have ended earlier, with fewer Allied casualties and a potentially different map of post-war Europe.[61]

With this statement Kiras falls into a trap of his own creation: by drawing such idealistic conclusions about the potential for far-reaching and decisive effects of

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[61] *Ibid.*, p.111

special operations he manages to undermine his own more rational and modest concepts about their value being strictly ancillary to conventional success.

Hogan has asserted that '.... partisan efforts in Italy and the Balkans had only a nuisance value and were rarely tied into the operations of conventional Allied combat units'.[62] At times the operations of partisans in the Balkans (or Greece for that matter) were certainly hindered by divergent political motivations and a lack of both weapons and formal military training, but to claim that their effectiveness was only of nuisance value is unconvincing. That these operations were not tied-in with an Allied land force (other than rather composite forces predominantly made up of special forces and Commandos in the later stages of the war) should not necessarily detract from their value, the sheer size and frequency of their operations in theatres suitable for guerrilla action, were ultimately a significant thorn in the Germany's side: it has been estimated that in 1943 that fifty German divisions were tied down in Yugoslavia and Albania on occupational and anti-partisan duties, more divisions than then were faced by the Allied armies in Italy.[63]

It should be noted, however, that in certain instances conflicts of interest and political tensions existing between Anglo-American special forces and partisan elements could be a real impediment to the activities of special forces. In both Greece and Yugoslavia tensions with emergent communist movements severely curtained the deployment of special forces, and towards the end of the war various LRDG and SBS personnel in Istria and Yugoslavia were physically detained by partisan forces seeking to gain political capital by downplaying the value of Allied assistance in the liberation of their areas.[64] Being widely comprised of bilingual first- and second-generation Americans, the OGs were a particular source of suspicion amongst the Greek and Balkan partisan movements. Despite proving themselves efficient and versatile in operations from Vis, the use of OGs on the Yugoslavian mainland was heavily curtailed for fears that their arrival would send out the wrong message to partisan elements.[65] Similar fears about the use of OGs in Greece and Albania had ensured that all 'Greek' OG personnel were

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[62] Hogan, *US Army*, pp.32-33
[63] Heaton, p.88
[64] Pitt (1983), p.163; IWM Lloyd-Owen, PP/MCR/C13, Reel 2; HQ BAF to AFHQ G-3, 17 January 1943, WO 204/1564
[65] Major Richard R. Quay, Reports Officer 'Greek' and 'Yugoslav' OGs to OG HQ, August 1944, RG 226, Entry 144, Box 68; Folder 588; The employment of No.30(Assault) Commando from Vis was also impeded by Tito's suspicions of an 'intelligence' unit. Lieutenant Glanville to OC, No.30 Commando, 7 November 1943, KCLMA Riley

submitted to a rigorous vetting procedure to root out any unacceptable political beliefs before they were allowed to be committed.[66]

The pressure of dealing with partisan movements possessing divergent political and military motivations to their own was an understandable source of frustration for the various special forces. Major Roy Farran of the 2nd SAS found that although the Resistance he came into contact with in France were 'quite energetic ... [by no means universal] the difference between our respective methods made close co-operation difficult, and it was better just to maintain a loose liaison'.[67] Similar sentiments were expressed by the commander of OG operation 'Peg' in France who believed it would have been more efficient to have dispatched a larger number of OG men (thirty were recommended) than having to rely on 'help of untrained [Maquis] men who do not understand what is to be done and valuable time is lost telling them what to do and how to do it'.[68] Whilst Jedburgh Aaron Bank would contend that: 'OSS would have been more effective in their insurgency and sabotage roles without the collaboration of the local militias'.[69] Many of the young men within special forces units, possessing 'little or no political experience', were shocked when they 'found that the amount of help which they received from the Partisans was governed not only by the military situation but also by the political outlook of the Partisan bands themselves'.[70] In Albania the RSR and OGs were often frustrated by the lacklustre behaviour of the Andartes partisans unwilling to harass German forces finally leaving their country. The emergent civil war in Greece between rival ELAS communist and EDES republican guerrillas, who were far more interested in fighting one another than the Germans, would cause some of the most significant problems for special forces attempting to harass and delay German movements in these areas.

Hogan's appraisal of partisan efforts in Italy being little more than of nuisance effect is equally perplexing. For much of the war, until mid-1944 at least, one can see Hogan's point, the partisans, small in number and uncoordinated, were of little significance. From late-1944 onwards, however, as SOE and OSS began to take serious efforts to

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[66] Special Operations Committee Memorandum, 'Employment of personnel of the American Greek Battalion', 5 September 1943, WO 201/2263
[67] Farran, pp.234-235
[68] Lieutenant Grahl H. Weeks, CO OG Section 'Peg', OG Command 'History of Operations in Southern France', *op. cit.*
[69] Heaton, p.53
[70] War Office 'Notes from theatres of war, No.22: Long Range Desert Group', December 1945, WO 231/28, p.37

organise and control the Italian partisans, they clearly began to have a beneficial effect upon the Allied armies in Italy. As General Mark Clark was to write: 'The role of the Italian partisans in supplementing the operations of the Allied Armies in Italy has been a most important one. Their attacks ... during the fall of 1944 and winter of 1944-5 were a constant and serious harassing problem for the enemy'.[71]

The competence of partisan formations in Italy was thus, to no small degree, down not only to the equipment supplied by the Allies, but also to the direction and moulding that came from varied special forces and clandestine elements. Just as General Clark praised the efficiency of the Partisans, he also contended: 'The outstanding success of partisan operations ... and the excellent intelligence as to enemy dispositions received was in large measure due to the presence of these [OG] men and their leadership of Partisan formations'.[72] It was a pattern that the Germans also observed. In early-1945, at a time when the Allies were stepping up their support for the partisans, Field-Marshal Kesselring reported that the partisans were beginning to

> .... show clear results. The execution of partisan operations shows considerably more commanding leadership. Up to now it has been possible for us, with a few exceptions, to keep our vital rear lines of communications open by means of our slight protective forces, but this situation threatens to change considerably for the worse in the immediate future.[73]

The 'commanding leadership' to which Kesselring referred was, at least in part, due to the various methods, including the use of special forces, with which Allied subversive and specialist elements were attempting to harness the partisan weapon in Italy at this time.

The feat of orchestrating, training, equipping and leading indigenous partisan formations is perhaps nowhere better witnessed than in the example of Burma. Detachment 101's contacting and marshalling of Kachin tribesmen into 'rangers' dramatically highlighted the effectiveness of partisans in offensive activities and proved that they could 'take the place of sizable regular units'. The commencement of Stilwell's Burma Road offensive was the catalyst for an expansion of 101's activities and by February 1945 over 10,000 'Kachin Rangers' had been raised. Their value to

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[71] General Clark, Commendation of 'Italian' OGs, May 1945, RG 226, Entry 99, Box 42; Folder 3
[72] Clark to CO, 'Italian' OGs, May 1945, RG 226, Entry 143, Box 11, Folder 146
[73] Intercepted telegram from Field-Marshal Kesselring to Field Commands, 26 February 1945, RG 226, Entry 99, Box 42; Folder 3

Stilwell's offensive was clear: the partisans acted as a screen and a force multiplier, as well as being responsible for some 5,447 known Japanese dead.[74] Merrill would claim that the Marauder's advance on Myitkyina 'could not have succeeded without [the] help of 101'.[75] Their achievements are put into perspective when it is considered that only 22 US personnel and 184 native guerrillas were killed during the Detachment's operations.[76] To put it another way, a battalion-size commitment from the US had raised a division-sized unit from indigenous populations, which had then succeeded in the destruction of a divisional-sized number of the enemy for the loss of less than a company's worth of men. The work of 'V' Force and of Force 136 (SOE) in this theatre were also of great assistance to the activities of Fourteenth Army in Southern Burma. In addition to providing what, at times, was significant intelligence, their activities alongside the Karen populations, in particular, produced solid offensive and screening results. Force 136's operation 'Character' from February 1945, for example, marshalled considerable numbers of Karen guerrillas and is estimated to have accounted for some 10,964 Japanese dead.[77]

Alongside those formations working in Burma, Naval Group China (SACO) was making similar contribution in China. SACO's reports of their achievements state that SACO-trained guerrillas 'killed over 25,000 enemy troops, wounded 11,642, captured 508 prisoners of war, destroyed 209 bridges, 82 locomotives, 193 ships and river craft, and aided in the rescue of over 76 Allied pilots and crewmen', all achieved without the loss of a single American advisor. Certainly this appears a phenomenal achievement, but these estimates are widely considered to be heavily jaundiced by the Chinese propensity to dramatically inflate claims. Such is the issue of doubt surrounding these claims that historians Zedric and Dilley have gone as far as suggesting that SACO's most significant contribution was in their provision of weather reports;[78] whilst Asprey has emphasised that for all of SACO's successes they were not able to prevent a 1944 offensive against Chennault's airfields.[79]

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[74] Colonel Peers, 'Detachment 101 ATB', RG 226, Entry 161, Box 8; Folder 86; Hogan, 'MacArthur, Stilwell', p.111; Roosevelt Vol.I, p.114
[75] Peers and Brelis, p.142
[76] *Ibid.*, p.184
[77] Dear, p.208
[78] Zedric and Dilley, pp.166-167
[79] Asprey, p.444

An assessment of the numbers of enemy killed, aircraft sabotaged, intelligence gained, or partisans trained, only goes so far into showing the ultimate utility of special operations during the war. Any overview of the effects of specialist formations, acting both independently and in conjunction with conventional operations, must also examine the less quantifiable and more abstract manner through which they have strategic utility. One of the clearest benefits to the employment of specialist formations is that they have the potential to act as force multipliers. As Gray asserts, 'special operations can work either as an economical equaliser or – better still – as critical leverage for victory'.[80] The LRDG, for instance, was raised with the explicit motivation to undertake operations far and wide so that the Italians would be bluffed into 'the impression of British ubiquity throughout the interior of Libya'.[81] Although conducting operations of a very modest scale at this time, LRDG actions in the deep interior of Libya certainly helped distract Graziani during 'Compass'. In Wavell's words, the unit made 'an important contribution towards keeping Italian forces in back areas on the alert and adding to the anxieties and difficulties of our enemy'.[82] The Italian reaction to an incursion of only a handful of men in their rear areas is evidence of what is potentially the most significant impact of special operations: to prey on enemy insecurities and coerce him to take excessive precautions against further operations.

Special operations have a definite objective to impel the enemy to alter their force dispositions unfavourably and expend resources unnecessarily, tying up men and material in wasteful tasks. General Hackett believed this to be their most significant role, stating: 'The aim … in using these special forces is to hinder the most effective application of the enemy's resources in war and to secure advantages in the employment of our own.'[83] The LRDG's first deployments caused the Italians to increase their defence of far flung outposts throughout Egypt and Libya, tying up a considerable number of personnel and weakening their defence of the crucial coastal areas.[84] These and later LRDG and SAS operations provoked similar responses, promoting amongst the enemy an ever-growing need to defend and patrol rear areas, something that diverted both manpower, materials and resources from the frontlines; a consequence almost as significant as the physical destruction of personnel and

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[80] Gray (1996), p.170
[81] Bagnold, p.125
[82] Wavell to Bagnold, 1 October 1940, WO 201/807
[83] Hackett (1952), p.28
[84] HMSO, *Destruction of an Army – The First Campaign in Libya*, (London, 1941) pp.58-59

resources in the raids themselves. The enemy was forced to waste manpower, resources, and time in the 'feverish and almost ceaseless search for the Will-o'-the-wisp that flitted about the enemy's back garden while the whole panoply of Allied might was swarming across his front lawns'.[85]

Similar motivations also underlined the original Commando raids. When General Bourne was first appointed DCO he considered the aim of raiding to be twofold: firstly the destruction of enemy resources; and, secondly to 'make him expend his resources, and to make his life as hard as possible'.[86] Admiral Keyes succeeded him with the directive to continually 'harass the enemy and cause him to disperse his forces, and to create material damage'.[87] This remained the spirit of practically all cross-Channel raiding and were goals that were as equally appealing to the US. When visiting Britain in March 1942 General Marshall had faith that whilst preparing for a cross-Channel assault 'continuous raiding' of the French coast would create 'a preliminary active front' that would provide combat experience to his soldiers whilst importantly diverting enemy resources and attention away from the critical situation on the Eastern Front.[88] Soon after, Churchill would write to Roosevelt to advise him that the key goal in the employment of the newly-established 'Californian Commandos' (USMC Raiders) should be 'to make the Japanese anxious for their numerous conquests and prevent them scraping together troops for further large excursions.'[89]

The motivation to tie up a disproportionate number of enemy resources was used as a central point of justification for Allied (overwhelmingly British) involvement in the Aegean, Adriatic and Greece. Beginning from late-1943 in the Aegean, and from early-1944 on the Dalmatian coast, raids were conducted against German occupied islands and coastlines with the hope that they would provoke the strengthening and retention of over-strength garrisons therein. In this goal the Allied special forces, aided by the partisans, were generally successful. Pitt has estimated that raiding in the Aegean by the SBS, LRDG and the Greek Sacred Squadron had caused, by May 1944, the reinforcement of Aegean garrisons by over 4,000 extra troops within a period of a

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[85] War Office 'Notes from theatres of war, No.22', *op. cit.*
[86] Lieutenant-General Bourne, DCO to COS Committee, 10 July 1940, CAB 80/14/60
[87] General Haining, Vice-CIGS, Memorandum on revised DCO Directive, 30 October 1940, WO 216/54
[88] Reynolds (1996), p.91; Harrison (1951), pp.15-16
[89] Churchill to Roosevelt, 1 April 1942, NARA: Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, FDR-MR: Papers as President, Map Room File, 1939-1945

month;[90] not a bad tally for units, which, in the case of the LRDG and SBS numbered no more than around 250 men each. Those special forces and Commandos on Vis throughout 1944 represented a continued 'thorn in the side of the Germans in the Balkans', their efforts are estimated to have been directly responsible for tying down three German divisions along the Yugoslav coast and another one in reserve, as well as playing a 'very notable part' in keeping 25 enemy divisions occupied in Yugoslavia in the spring and summer of 1944.[91] Although the Allied specialist formations were only responsible for a token of the larger anti-partisan and occupational difficulties that the enemy faced in these areas, they do, in terms of numbers and materials the enemy were forced to expend in response to such actions, seem to have been a worthwhile practice.

The Commando raid on Vaagso in January 1942 would prey very successfully on German insecurities, and resulted in Hitler dispatching significant resources to Norway in an effort to protect against potential future Allied landings. Notably the raid, alongside other factors such as the 'Fortitude North' deception schemes (as its is quite unconvincing to attribute the dramatic reinforcement to the raid alone), confined much of the German fleet to Norwegian waters and ensured that by D-Day some ten German divisions were left idle in Norway.[92] The benefits of German reinforcement was not, however, understood by exiled Norwegian Prime Minister Nygaardsvold, who stated: '"Who could be so blind as to delude himself that this effort could have done anything to shorten the ordeal of Norway? .... the Germans would now strengthen their defences making the ultimate victory even harder to achieve than it would have been if the raid had never taken place".'[93] As far as Britain was concerned, however, this was an acceptable, even favourable, outcome, but Nygaardsvold's point would hold greater resonance in application to other theatres of war in which the Allies *did* intend to conduct conventional operations.

As raiding operations had the power to compel the enemy to alter his dispositions, reinforcement schedule and fortification schemes, it became absolutely essential that these operations be tightly controlled lest they prompt the enemy to strengthen his defences in areas potentially to the detriment of conventional arms. The last thing that would be wanted when planning a large-scale amphibious landing, for example, would

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[90] Pitt (1983), p.146
[91] 'History of the Commandos in the Mediterranean', DEFE 2/700; p.296-297
[92] Keegan, John, *Churchill*, (Weidenfeld & Nicholson: London, 2002) p.129
[93] Quoted in Young, pp.87-88

be to find that you faced a stronger or more entrenched enemy because of the uncontrolled activities of a handful of raiders. When considering the relative benefits of small scale raiding against France in late-1942 Admiral Forbes, C-in-C Plymouth, doubted whether the advantages of raiding, such as intelligence gains, material destruction or even the dissipation of enemy manpower, outweighed the disadvantages. Such operations, he believed, would draw the enemy's attention to 'weak spots in his defences' which would have adverse ramifications not only for future amphibious landings, but also for destroyer and mine laying operations off the enemy coast and for the insertion of SIS and SOE agents.[94] Such a reticence about small-scale raids on France increased with the advancing preparations for 'Overlord'.

At the start of 1944 Lieutenant-General Morgan, COSSAC, was arguing the case for more raids and was 'firmly convinced of the necessity for blooding our Rangers and Commandos before the day of battle on which they are destined to perform exploits of which the success must be assured.' Instead of curtailing or cancelling operations he believed 'that we should redouble our efforts. Not to do this is to leave the German in undisputed possession of his ill-gotten gains and to forgo our only opportunity of giving Commandos and Ranger units much required experience'.[95] Such a scheme met with little favour, however, and the potential disadvantages of raiding were seen to outweigh the advantages. At this time all raids with the purpose of 'beating up' the enemy had already been stopped; there were to be no needless operations in the 'Neptune' area (with at least three cover raids undertaken for every one reconnaissance operation mounted); and there was a decree that no raid would 'exceed strength of 100 all ranks', a limitation 'imposed with the object of not encouraging the GERMANS to strengthen their coastal defences'.[96]

Even with these limitations, and the fact that poor weather during the January 'dark period' had ensured that few raids were mounted, Major-General de Guingand, Chief of Staff, 21 Army Group, began to argue against the necessity of all such raids. He came to 'the conclusion that a policy of raiding anywhere on the BELGIUM/FRENCH coast is wrong. ... We have told the enemy that we are going to invade the continent this Spring. I feel that the best way to fox him as regards the sector which we have

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[94] Minutes of Admiralty meeting, 4 November 1942, ADM 116/5112
[95] Correspondence between COSSAC and G-3, SHAEF, January 1944, RG 331, Entry 29A, Box 120; Folder SHAEF/17225/Ops
[96] COSSAC, 'Raids and Reconnaissance Programme', 20 January 1944, RG 331, Entry 12, Box 14; Folder SHAEF/6RX/INT

chosen for the invasion, is to stop raiding altogether'. He argued that all raids risked exposing to the enemy his weaknesses, and believed that any information gained from commando raids should not be commensurate with the risks that mounting them entailed. Furthermore, he believed that even cover raids could potentially draw attention to the actual beaches which were chosen to land on or, more likely, provoke a universal improvement of defences.[97] Such arguments were considered by the Raids and Reconnaissance Committee and generally accepted, with a large proportion of the initially intended raids subsequently being cancelled.

The potential ills of a raid leading to undesirable enemy reinforcement is well illustrated by the example of the 2nd Raider's raid on Makin in August 1942. Aside from destructive motivations, the raid had, as an explicit goal, the creation of 'a diversion confusing Japanese plans and diverting forces from the stronger concentrations being assembled to attack Guadalcanal in late August'. At face value the raid can be said to have succeeded in all its purposes, 'inflicting loss of planes, ships, supplies, and men, and diverted ships and aircraft, by causing the formation of a Makin relief force'.[98] The latter result would, however, have more significant repercussions. It has been argued that the raid sparked the elaborate fortification and reinforcement of the Japanese garrisons in the Gilberts; most notably on the Tarawa atoll (neighbouring Makin), the invasion of which, in November 1943, was infamously bloody for the USMC. With this consideration in mind, Alexander believes 'the raid accrued no strategic benefit. Quite the opposite: Carlson stirred up a hornet's nest in what had been a quiet, lightly held backwater of the Japanese perimeter.'[99]

Just as there are limitations in praising raids for independently causing the enemy to divert his resources (as in Vaagso), there are equal difficulties in proportioning blame for events like Makin. Kenneth Macksey has asked that if the Makin raid sparked the strengthening of defences, then why was there a delay of a year before the Gilberts were reinforced in earnest? Why did this reinforcement occur at the same time as a more general Japanese transition to the defensive?[100] The strengthening of defences as the Axis powers were placed on the strategic defensive would have occurred irrespective of the conduct of special operations. As COHQ emphasised in late-1942,

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[97] Correspondence of General de Guingand, 27 January 1944, DEFE 2/1093
[98] Admiral Nimitz to Admiral King, 20 October 1942, RG 127, USMC Geographic Files, Makin, Box 183
[99] Alexander, pp.26-27
[100] Macksey (1985), p.120

the enemy will not 'increase his RDF cover and CD Batteries to beat off small parties of men in canoes. Any measures he may take to counter our seaborne activities against his coastal convoys, he will take on their own merits.'[101] Furthermore, Makin did result in some positive benefits: it highlighted the limitations of rubber boat landings against atolls and concomitant necessity for amtracks – an important lesson for the assault on Tarawa; it also provided valuable intelligence for the 27th Infantry Division's eventual invasion of Makin.[102]

In addition to attacking the enemy physically, special operations also assaulted his morale. By targeting the enemy in areas that he had heretofore considered as being under his control special operations could foster paranoia, prey on insecurities, and humiliate the enemy. It would, however, be incorrect to assume that the earliest infrequent and amateurish Commando raids would have any great effect upon the morale of a triumphant enemy. The psychological toll inflicted by special operations was not properly manifested until the enemy's situation had deteriorated significantly as a result of other factors. On 13 October 1942 Churchill asked Mountbatten to further 'intensify his small scale raids' because he 'was certain that the Germans were being worried by them'.[103] Churchill was right. One week later Hitler betrayed his frustration by issuing his infamous Commando order (which pressed for the execution of all individuals caught waging irregular warfare irrespective of uniform). Concerted activities in the rear by partisans, special forces and subversive agencies awakened latent German insecurities about a repetition of the 'stab in the back' myth of their 1918 collapse. As irregular activities increased in volume and were increasingly wedded to successful Allied offensives, their effect on a harried enemy naturally intensified.[104]

In addition to the long-term assault on enemy morale caused by the threat of constant action from an unknown angle, there was also the potential for more immediate tactical psychological effects, whereby the very presence on the battlefield of elite formations (most commonly of the commando-type) could be enough to promote fear amongst the enemy. The sight of a red or green beret, or hearing shouts of 'Commando! Commando!' in the attack (used just as much for maintaining cohesion and an

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[101] COHQ to Director of Plans, 24 December 1942, ADM 116/5112
[102] Crowl, Philip A. and Love, Edmund G., *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*, (Department of the Army: Washington D.C., 1955) pp.62-63
[103] Minutes of COS meeting, 13 October 1942, ADM 116/5112
[104] Kiras, p.3

identification of friend and foe, as it was a psychological device) could be enough to provoke a response of retreat or surrender amongst poorly led or haggard troops. At Anzio, for example, during their period holding the beachhead, the FSSF intentionally undertook aggressive patrols, in order to gain the moral ascendancy over their German counterparts. The Force clearly emphasised their presence with terrifying night-time raids, intentionally provoking fear amongst the Germans they faced, who consequently dubbed them the 'black devils' brigade'. Reg Seekings, of the SAS, believed elite credentials 'made a lot of difference. If the British troops knew they were up against German paratroopers, they were half beaten already. It's the psychological effect you have on ordinary troops. They can't stand up to specialist troops.'[105] This is a contention that had vivid illustration in the Aegean, whereby Raiding Forces intentionally 'created a reign of terror' amongst the German island garrisons, so that when the island of Samos was attacked, the enemy garrison of 1,200 men in well fortified positions surrendered unconditionally 'to a trifling Allied force because they were literally frightened for their lives of Raiding Forces'.[106]

The value of special operations causing fear amongst occupying garrisons must, however, be weighed against the potential risk of reprisals against innocent civil populations.[107] Seymour doubts that any benefits of the earliest Commando raids 'justified the reprisals sometimes meted out to the local inhabitants.'[108] Despite attempts by political warfare agencies to keep local inhabitants, and the enemy (so as they did not unfairly proportion blame), informed about the intention of raids, there were occasional mishaps. In the immediate aftermath of the St. Nazaire raid, for example, Lucas Phillips claimed that sixteen[109] French civilians were killed and a large number wounded because of panicked Germans attributing subsidiary and delayed-action explosives to them; and in addition some 1,500 local men were subsequently arrested and sent to internment camps.[110]

Reprisals against civilians and partisans alike obviously intensified with the commencement of open-resistance warfare; because of this, the dispatch of special

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[105] Quoted in Stevens, Gordon, *The Originals*, (Ebury: London, 2005) p.290
[106] 'Raiding Forces – the story of an Independent Command in the Aegean, 1943-1945', WO 201/2836 p.35
[107] Foot (1984), p.81
[108] Seymour, p.13
[109] Saunders put this figure as high as 300. Saunders, Hilary St. George, *The Green Beret*, (Michael Joseph: London, 1949) p.98
[110] Lucas Phillips, C.E., *The Greatest Raid of All*, (Pan Books: London, 2000) p.259

forces to an area was occasionally resented because of the unwelcome attention that their presence could bring. This point is vividly illustrated in a report that Commissar Mamola of the Second Partisan Sector on Dugi Otok (an island on the northern Dalmatian coast) made to an OSS officer, Lieutenant John Hamilton. Expressing strong disapproval of the Commando and OG raids against various islands under his command he asked:

> "Why do they want to make raids on these Islands? They plan to come here, make a raid, kill a few Germans, capture 30 to 40 and then return to Vis with all kinds of stories; in the meanwhile the Germans will come over here take this island, burn a few villages, kill our civilians and we will have to run away to another Island. .... Our people must realise that this is NOT SPORT, THIS IS NOT RUGBY!".[111]

The moral cost of the Second World War was very great, and when the gritty realities of unconventional warfare are merged with the actions of an enemy wedded to a brutal anti-partisan doctrine, such reprisals became practically impossible to avoid.

One of the more intangible benefits of the conduct of special operations was the fillip to morale which they could provide to a nation's military and home front. In both Britain and the US specialist formations were (and remain) a source of great fascination and interest to the general public. Special operations give the impression of speed, dash, finesse and adventure; traits rarely associated with the protracted slogging matches of open fronts. As John Newsinger wrote in a unique assessment of this phenomena: '.... the story of the SAS in the Second World War is an adventure story. Young ex-public-school boys, the cream of the British race, leading their men in daring, sometimes foolhardy exploits against a brutal enemy'.[112] Special operations offered welcome escapism from the realities of modern industrial warfare; they personalised conflict and created heroes; and served as a tonic for both conventional defeat and inactivity.[113] They rekindled the spirit of T.E. Lawrence and allayed the fears of repercussions of the horrors of stalemated attrition of the First World War.

The creation of popular heroes was of course not limited to specialist formations, but for a time, their operations offered a welcome glimmer of hope for harassed and strategically defensive, or stalemated, nations; they consequently became an obvious

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[111] Lieutenant Hamilton to SSO Bari, 10 May 1944, RG 226, Entry 136, Box 19; Folder 197
[112] Newsinger, John, *Dangerous Men: The SAS and Popular Culture*, (Pluto: London, 1997) p.12
[113] Gray (1996), p.175

focal point for both press attention and propaganda. As Gray states: 'Special operations can make the point that a powerful and feared enemy can be outfought on his own terms and thereby be denied moral ascendancy'.[114] When conventional operations were neither possible nor successful, successes, however slight, could become magnified for the benefit of morale, giving hope and renewed confidence in a nation's martial abilities. Early Commando raids were undertaken, as much as for any other reason, simply 'To cheer-up everyone at home'.[115] An August 1942 OSS appraisal of the Commandos would even suggest that their 'main purpose ... is that of publicity'.[116] Roger Beaumont has even gone as far as suggesting that: '.... the dashing image of the Commandos transcended any resources the Nazis were forced to allocate to defence or damage done'.[117]

The US seized upon the value of special operations for publicity purposes to an even greater extent than did the British. As the first ever independent raid undertaken by US specialist formations the Raider raid on Makin was an ideal candidate for a publicity campaign. Coming at a time when US ground forces had not been actively involved in the war, this raid of great daring, outwardly very successful, led by the charismatic and easily heroised Carlson and his swashbuckling Raiders, which included the President's son, obviously received press attention. Admiral Nimitz would later claim that the primary purpose of the raid was 'to boost morale'.[118] In this goal it certainly succeeded and would make a 'news splash' which was 'almost as stimulating to morale as the Doolittle air strike over Japan.'[119] At the same time as the Makin Raid the US press also reported with alacrity the participation of the Rangers at Dieppe. Four US correspondents had accompanied the raid (as compared to three Canadian and two British) and the results of their reportage left 'an American public ... cheering offensive action and wanting more'. Black estimated that the handful of Rangers who participated 'were worth an army division to the American war effort'.[120] In this instance there would, however, be diplomatic ramifications as both Britain and Canada

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[114] *Ibid.*, p.175
[115] Hughes-Hallett, pp.580-581
[116] Stacey Lloyd to Major Bruce, 5 August 1942, RG 226, Entry 92, Box 111, Folder 49
[117] Beaumont, Roger, *Joint Military Operations*, (Greenwood: Connecticut, 1993) p.87
[118] Notes on conference with Admiral Nimitz and General Megee, 24 April 1957, RG 127, Entry 46B, Box 100
[119] USMC Historical Branch Account of Makin Raid, RG 127, Entry 46B, Box 100
[120] Black (1992), p.47

took umbrage to the disproportionate attention lavished upon the mere handful of Rangers.[121]

Perhaps the finest example of a special operation receiving press attention is the 6th Ranger's raid on the Cabanatuan prison camp in the Philippines; an operation whose motives were governed more by 'sentimental allure' than by any intrinsic strategic priority.[122] Colonel Mucci, commanding the Rangers, certainly understood the benefits of courting the press and had taken four official Army photographers along with his unit on the raid.[123] The raid itself was extremely successful, the Rangers, aided by 300 guerrillas and Alamo Scouts, had liberated over 500 prisoners and accounted for 532 Japanese dead for the loss of one Ranger and 26 guerrillas killed.[124] The results were a publicist's dream: a deft, tactically masterful mission of mercy to liberate some of the famed prisoners of Baatan. It is of little surprise that MacArthur, himself no novice at publicity and self-aggrandisement, latched onto the raid's successes claiming that: "No incident of the campaign has given me such personal satisfaction".'[125]

Publicising special operations also had a political agenda. To both allies and enemies alike well publicised special operations could promote an impression of an energetic and martially talented nation. Raiding operations, most notably Dieppe, helped in some way to protect the British against accusations of passivity regarding the opening of a second front. They were, in the opinion of Villa, 'a showpiece for the Americans ... to dispel the impression of passivity and defensiveness that was doing so much to erode the good opinion of British fighting resolve that Americans had formed during the Battle of Britain'.[126] As Churchill admitted: 'Small scale raids by the Commandos ... not only gave us confidence and experience, but showed the world that although beset on all sides we were not content with passive defence.'[127] The US would similarly benefit from their employment of specialist units which contributed to an appearance of ubiquity: the use of OGs in Yugoslavia and Greece, or of Detachment 404 in the Arakan, for example, flew the US flag of participation in theatres in which their

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[121] Robertson, Terence, *Dieppe – The Shame and The Glory*, (Pan Books: London, 1965) pp.195-196; 460
[122] Sides, Hampton, *Ghost Soldiers*, (Doubleday: New York, 2001) p.63
[123] *Ibid.*, p.65
[124] Mucci, Henry A., 'Rescue at Cabanatuan', *Infantry Journal*, Vol.56, April 1945, pp.15-19, p.19
[125] 6th Ranger Battalion Combat History, January 1945, RG 407, Entry 427, Box 21079; Folder INBN-6-0
[126] Villa, Brian Loring, *Unauthorised Action*, (Oxford University Press: Canada, 1989) p.166
[127] Churchill, Winston S., *The Second World War – Volume V: Closing the Ring*, (Cassell: London, 1952) p.64

presence was otherwise negligible. As the first American ground force in Burma, for example, Merrill's Marauders (whose non-official name itself was an invention of correspondents attached to Stilwell's Command) had an inherent degree of political capital and would attract 'a greater share of attention from the press ... than a similar-sized unit merited anywhere else'.[128]

If overused and over publicised, however, raiding operations could ultimately prove to be a source of clear frustration to both the war-weary general public and embattled allies, who may come to view such pinpricks themselves as a sign of passivity and reluctance to begin large-scale conventional operations. There was also a real danger that undue publicity would increase the negative perception of specialist elements as being 'prima donnas', and be the cause of increased resentment amongst regular troops facing the unglamorous realities of frontline combat. As Churchill wrote after Dieppe: 'It is natural that there should be some resentment in the Army at the undue emphasis laid upon the work of the Commandos by the Press'.[129] The same resentments were seen within the USMC following the press attention bestowed on the Raiders after Makin, which many believed was 'too extensive, too complimentary'.[130] Such resentments are understandable for, as Timpson of the LRDG asserted when assessing the value of his unit in the Desert War:

> .... set against Montgomery's nine divisions at Alamein, the nine Italian divisions and the German Panzer Army's five divisions, the glamour which is attached to irregular formations is not entirely fair. An infantryman or trooper or gunner or sapper with his unit could do little but try his best to fulfil his duty and slog it out.[131]

Despite the aggrandisement and mythologizing of specialist achievements prevalent in both wartime and post-war literature (and most commonly found in popular histories narrowly focused on one single unit or operation), it should be considered axiomatic that special operations did not win the war. Their achievements, whilst often notable, were dwarfed by the sheer magnitude of the conflict. As Field-Marshal Slim stated: 'Armies do not win wars by means of a few bodies of super-soldiers but by the average quality of their standard units'.[132] In any assessment of the wartime value of special

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[128] Tuchman, Barbara, *Sand Against the Wind*, (Macmillan: London, 1971) pp.432-433
[129] Churchill Vol.IV, p.789
[130] Linderman, Gerald F., *The World Within War*, (Harvard University Press, 1997) p.230
[131] Timpson and Gibson-Watt, p.12
[132] Slim, p.547

operations this point must be fully recognised. The achievements of specialist formations must be kept in perspective.

Disconnected from the activities and interests of greater campaigns, the value of special operations were, with a few possible exceptions (such the seizure of intelligence materials during the Lofotens raid or the strike on the hydro-electric plant at Vemork), of less overall value to the course of the war than were those specialist activities which were wedded (however intangibly, and at whatever depth) to the actions of conventional formations. The utility of the majority of pinprick raids which occurred in the early years of the war was strictly moot and, aside from the occasional tactical coup, even their irritant effect was negligible against a triumphant enemy. The intelligence benefits of these operations was similarly slim; landing on a coast snatching a prisoner or two was not a war-winning weapon, and against the completeness of signals intelligence, their impact pales in comparison. Perhaps the greatest benefit of such undertakings was that they offered a beacon of hope for the victory-starved people in Britain. It would not be until the enemy had witnessed a general downturn in his strategic position, a result of conventional actions, that pinpricks began to represent a cumulative threat for the enemy.

There is a certain irony about the use of specialist formations. Although commonly created in the first half of the war as a means of regaining the strategic initiative and of acting as a force multiplier for conventional arms, their greatest effects occurred once Allied arms had begun to engage the enemy, or were already beating the enemy in a position of material and physical superiority. Their greatest value came in a climate where their unique talents were, if valuable, no longer strictly necessary. Victory in these later circumstances was reliant on conventional arms, and any effects that specialist forces could achieve would be strictly supportive. Their utility, with a few exceptions, was reliant upon the performance of regular forces to capitalise on their actions. Forcing the enemy to alter his dispositions, for example, is only of value if regular forces are able to seize the opportunity and strike at a weakened point. Their strategic utility, as Gray asserts, 'derives largely from the quality and quantity of performance by conventional forces. .... War is a team endeavour. A special operation can open a door, but the regular forces may not be able to follow through'.[133]

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[133] Gray (1996), pp.143-144

Taken as a subsidiary to conventional deployments, however, where an enemy is fully engaged at the front, the whole gamut of specialist deployments have more impact helping, in various ways, to accelerate the pace of conventional success. Commando and ranger formations were ultimately of more value as elite spearhead and shock troops than they ever were as raiders. That, of course, was the reason for their evolution in role; beaches had to be taken, mountain tops assaulted, and flanks secured. Commando and ranger formations offer numerous examples of undertaking such tasks both quickly and successfully. Raiding activities by special forces in support of an active campaign could disrupt enemy lines of communication and infrastructure and hinder the enemy's ability to control and reinforce his fighting troops. The threat they posed also necessitated the enemy to waste valuable manpower and resources in guarding rear areas and prompted disproportionately heavy attempts to engage the elements doing the harassment. Such a diversion of effort from the front, exacerbated by the growth of indigenous guerrilla movements, could be as significant as any material destruction which the raids themselves caused. The intelligence benefits of special forces were similarly magnified when working for the direct benefit of conventional formations; a fact well illustrated by the value of the intelligence that the LRDG, Alamo Scouts or Detachment 101 provided. On occasions the intelligence provided by these units was unique and obtainable through no other source, at other times their intelligence was supportive and of value simply because it could verify existing information.

In 1959 Peter Fleming made the correct prediction that: 'There will always be controversy about any unorthodox achievements, however valuable they appear to be.'[134] Although it is true to say that the Allies would have won the war had they not adopted irregular warfare or employed specialist units, it does not mean, however, that there is no latitude to recognise the contribution which specialist units did have to the Allied war effort. However proportionately small, the actions of specialist formations would each have impact, none independently decisive, but all contributory to eventual Allied victory: at times they could accelerate the pace of success and limit casualties; they could provoke a paranoid enemy into making the wrong move; they were able to wreak material and physical destruction upon the enemy which, at a local level, disrupted his war effort and military manoeuvre; they could serve as a focal point for allied morale whilst being corrosive to that of the enemy; they provided a test bed for

[134] Fleming, p.387

new doctrines and methods and enabled experience to be gained and disseminated. Even if the impact of these many achievements are impossible to precisely quantify, it appears that when assessed fairly, and not in the fantastical expectation of causing decisive independent impact, the Anglo-American specialist formations certainly made a valuable contribution to the Allied war effort.

Chapter 7
Cost-effectiveness

Having highlighted the various achievements of Anglo-American specialist formations of the Second World War and their, albeit modest, contribution to the Allied war effort, it is now apt to ask, were they cost-effective? Was the expenditure and effort exerted in their creation, deployment, and use proportionate with the results that they achieved? Was, in the framework which General Thompson has judged effectiveness, the 'return' gained by these units worth the 'investment'?[1] These calculations are very important and embrace not only the issue of specialist 'achievements' but also wider issues related to the policies which Britain and America adopted towards the procurement, proliferation, expansion and disbandment of specialist formations. These calculations are not, however, easy, and any assessment of an individual unit's cost-effectiveness turns upon a variety of variables, some readily quantifiable, others more abstruse. The most central of these variables are: the scale of a formation's establishment; the frequency of its employment; the utility of its actions; and both the operational and non-operational costs of its development and use. The interplay between these variables was unique to every formation and it thus becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible, to compare in detail the cost-effectiveness of each unit: how can, for example, the relative cost-effectiveness of the clutch of men in the SBS be adequately compared to a unit the likes of Merrill's Marauders which was undertaking a dramatically different task with an establishment of approximately 2,500 men? It thus becomes necessary to address the themes of cost-effectiveness in broad terms which refer to specific examples for the illustration of argument.

One of the key theoretical benefits to special operations is that they have the promise of reaping disproportionately favourable results that are not commensurate with the expenditure of men and materials taken up in their conduct. Whilst this theory, as will be seen, was certainly not universally applicable, in a number of instances it does, however, have a clear resonance. For the British, there is no better example of a cost-effective specialist formation than the LRDG. The virtuosity and value of the unit has been well emphasised in preceding chapters, but when it is also considered that the unit remained of a very modest size throughout the war (never exceeding an operational strength of 250 men and often working with considerably less); that the unit made no

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[1] Thompson (1998), p.7

outrageous demands on equipment or resources; and that the unit was almost continually employed (there was only a five month total in its existence during which no operational patrols were active), a very favourable impression of cost-effectiveness becomes apparent. Thompson has thus suggested that the LRDG should be considered 'the yardstick by which one should gauge those that came after them'.[2] Within the US example, a comparative 'yardstick' is found in the Alamo Scouts. Mirroring the successes and flexibility of deployment of the LRDG, the Scouts were also widely and consistently deployed (the unit conducted some 106 missions during their one-and-a-half years operational existence); made as few demands on resources or on personnel (consisting of no more than 140 men during the war) and, unlike even the LRDG, would sustain no losses whilst on operations.[3]

Because of their notable achievements and consistent employment at a very low cost, for the purposes of this argument, the LRDG and Alamo Scouts can, perhaps equally, be viewed as paragons of cost-effectiveness. It would, however, be quite fallacious to assume that all specialist formations were able to match the record of the LRDG or Alamo Scouts; to assume that formations were always of a modest scale; consistently deployed; or successful. Whilst even the most ardent critic of specialist formations would have difficulty in arguing against the merits and value of units such as the LRDG and Alamo Scouts, there remain numerous critics of the general proliferation of irregular formations during the war which contend that, in the words of Field-Marshal Slim, special forces were 'expensive, wasteful, and unnecessary'.[4]

One of the most acute criticisms levelled against specialist formations was directed at the demands which they made on scarce manpower reserves which, it is claimed, deprived the conventional arms, most particularly the infantry, of large numbers of good men. John Terraine criticised all specialist formations, or 'private armies', as being a 'not legitimate, or even sensible' drain on manpower. He believed that the Commandos were the 'most famous' of the 'offenders'; saw the Chindits as an 'aberration ... allowed to spoil a whole Division'; viewed the Airborne Forces as 'the worst of all'; and was equally dismissive of the LRDG and SAS believing that, though few in numbers, they helped to 'compound the felony'.[5] John Peaty, studying the

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[2] *Ibid.*, p.33
[3] Zedric, p.11
[4] Slim, p.548
[5] Terraine, John, *The Right of the Line*, (Hodder and Stoughton: London, 1985) p.642

British Army manpower shortage of 1944, similarly claimed that the proliferation of special forces 'distorted the British Army's manpower distribution and contributed to its manpower problems', and that 'on any rational assessment the inflated and under-employed Special Forces which the British Army possessed during WWII were not cost-effective. Quite simply, the benefits did not match the costs'.[6]

Such arguments are, however, distorted by two principal factors: their adoption of rather simplistic conclusions about specialist value and achievements (which commonly ignore many of the more intangible benefits of special operations), and more significantly, their adoption of an overwhelmingly broad definition of special forces that encompasses, in addition to the Commandos and special forces of this thesis: the airborne forces, mountain trained units, specially-trained 'regular' battalions, and the Chindits. Using such a definition, Peaty estimated that in 1944 within the British Army there was a total of 91 Battalions of special forces, equating to some 25 brigades, or ten Infantry Divisions worth of men.[7] These figures are, however, misleading. If the definition of specialist formations is restricted to those commando and special forces units inclusive of this thesis, the 'drain' on manpower becomes significantly lessened. Using these narrower definitions, it is estimated that by mid-1944 the British had 'on the books' a maximum of approximately 13,000 men tied up in commando and special forces. The US, at this time, had a slightly smaller figure of approximately 10,000 men involved in specialist formations.[8] At the height of the Allied manpower shortage, therefore, an approximate 23,000 Allied servicemen were in specialist units, enough manpower (at the average figures of the day) to have formed slightly under two Infantry Divisions. Although this remains a noteworthy drain on manpower reserves, taken alongside an understanding of the wider achievements of special operations, these figures do, nevertheless, dramatically lessen the weight of argument against their proliferation.

The quantity of the manpower drain caused by specialist units is further exacerbated by the quality of the personnel which these formations absorbed. Because of the nature of their roles; the process of volunteerism; the physical demands of training; and the necessity of finding the right man for the job, specialist formations tended (and

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[6] Peaty, John Robert, 'British Army Manpower Crisis 1944', PhD Thesis, King's College London, 2000, pp.101; 137
[7] *Ibid.*, pp.103-104
[8] See Appendix II for a breakdown of these estimates and those for other stages of the war.

continue) to attract 'warriors': enterprising men of initiative, physically and mentally fit individuals who wanted to see action; many of whom would likely have made excellent NCOs or junior officers had they served in more regular formations.[9] This 'leadership drain', aggravated by high casualty rates, serves, in the opinion of Gary Bounds, to create a '"selection-destruction" cycle that leads to depletion of assets that are not readily replaceable'.[10] In an assessment of the utility of the Commandos Colonel Twohig would stress how unfavourable this was and emphasised the 'many shambles' that had occurred during the war resulting from the lack of good leaders. He argued that the 'gallantry and skill the Commandos displayed did not compensate for the dearth of good junior leaders to which their existence was a big contributing factor.[11] Similar arguments were advanced in the US particularly over the establishment of the Raiders at a time when the USMC were desperately 'struggling to flesh out the rapidly expanding divisions on a meagre skeleton of experienced men'.[12]

That specialist formations drained a proportion of talented individuals who would have been of good service elsewhere is not in dispute; but at least a degree of diversion of such personnel was a natural and unavoidable concomitant to the decision to create new formations. Although the process of volunteerism, endemic to the creation of many specialist formations, often attracted the most keen 'warriors' and weeded out those physically and mentally unsuitable, for the majority of units, however, being able to 'cherry-pick' recruits from existent formations for expansion or reinforcement was a rare privilege. The reinforcement and replacement of highly trained personnel was a perennial problem for wartime specialist formations. High attrition in protracted operations ensured the 'problem of reinforcement was often paralysing to the Commandos'.[13] The volunteer principle of the Army Commandos and the requirement to provide specialist instruction to any new recruits made reinforcement a difficult prospect. On average only 20-25 percent of those volunteering for the Commandos would actually make it through training to be accepted. Despite the problems this caused, for the Army Commandos the volunteer principle remained sacrosanct, as Brigadier Haydon of the SS Brigade would write, the Commandos 'should either

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[9] For a good discussion of the 'warrior' and the implications of this for modern SOF, see: Henriksen, Rune, 'Warriors in Combat – What Makes People Actively Fight in Combat?', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.30, No.2, (April 2007), pp.187-223

[10] Bounds, Gary L., *Notes on Elite Units*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1984)

[11] Twohig, Lieutenant-Colonel, J.P. O'Brien, 'Are Commandos Really Necessary?', *Army Quarterly*, (October 1948), Vol.LVII, No.1, pp.86-88, p.88

[12] Hoffman (1995); Isely and Crowl, p.155

[13] 'History of the Commandos in the Mediterranean', DEFE 2/700

consist of volunteers as it does now or be done away with. It is quite fantastic what a fundamental difference it makes and I am certain that the volunteer principle is one to which we simply must adhere'.[14] Although the Royal Marine Commandos (created, with the exception of 'A' Commando, from direct conversions of Royal Marine Battalions) did not adhere to this same volunteer principle, they often faced even greater problems with reinforcement than their Army counterparts simply because of a more general shortage of available Royal Marine personnel.

American ranger formations also faced particular difficulty in both recruiting and in replacing their losses. As General Devers would claim in reference to Italy: 'The greatest obstacle to overcome in the special forces ... has been the problem of suitable replacements'.[15] Although for much of the time ranger units remained as dependent upon the (much despised) replacement depots as were the rest of the US Army, from such sources they were, however, generally able to attract the best and most willing personnel available, and then, if time constraints allowed, would commonly submit these to an extensive 'weeding out process'. When the 3rd and 4th Rangers were being recruited from these sources, for example, Darby was willing to accept 'green troops' but only an approximate 150 men out of 1,000 volunteers would ultimately be deemed suitable for service in the Rangers.[16]

As the war progressed and as manpower shortages became more acute, the majority of new specialist units, notably the mainstay of the RM Commandos and the 6th Ranger Battalion, were formed not from volunteers but by direct conversions ('weeding out' inclusive) of existent and generally underemployed units. In such instances the idea of 'drain' becomes negligible and it is easy to advance the case, for example, that the 6th Rangers were of infinitely more use in the South-West Pacific than they ever were as the 98th Field Artillery Battalion. It should further be recognised that at least a proportion of the personnel attracted to irregular units would have been wasted, if not have been totally misplaced, within regular units. As Foot asserted, many individuals 'were able to achieve a significant role in the war solely because they were in SOE, which provided the unique, unorthodox channel through which their martial abilities

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[14] Major-General Haydon to Major-General J.S. Steele, Director of Staff Duties, War Office, 13 October 1943, WO 32/10417

[15] General Jacob Devers, AFHQ to War Department, 13 March 1944, RG 165, Entry 418, Box 682; Folder OPD 320.2

[16] Brigadier Norman D. Cota, 'Observation of Operation HUSKY', August 1943, RG 165, Entry 418, Box 1249; Folder OPD 381

could be expressed'.[17] Many men within the Anglo-American special forces of the Second World War were not warrior-supermen but gifted amateurs, whose unique knowledge and skills (be it, for instance, a virtuosity in desert travel and navigation; an expertise in swimming or working with small boats and canoes; or an esoteric aptitude for the unconventional) would have been largely squandered in more conventional formations.

Whilst this 'manpower drain', on occasions exacerbated by heavy casualties, was arguably one of the most notable 'costs' of the development and use of specialist formations, so long as the men taken up in these units were employed adequately, the significance of this 'drain' is greatly lessened. The manpower consumption of specialist formations should be kept in perspective. During the war numerous sources absorbed valuable potential infantry recruits, and any assessment of the merits of one branch over another is fraught with difficulty. Cases could certainly be advanced that a greater 'drain' came from the Allied air forces which, whilst attracting large numbers of what certainly *were* the best and the brightest, also lost large proportions in the costly and indecisive strategic bombing campaigns that, as Weiss stated, 'demanded the combined utilisation of two limited resources, intelligence, well-trained personnel and sophisticated technology. These shortages in personnel, aircraft and supplies imposed tight restrictions on irregular warfare'.[18]

For those special forces that operated at depth, there is much potential for comparisons of cost-effectiveness to be made with the use of Allied air power. When not mutually supportive, the parallels between the roles of certain special forces and airpower (such as the undertaking of raids, interdiction, harassment, or reconnaissance activities) lend themselves to cost-effectiveness calculations. The limitations, or unavailability, of airpower to adequately conduct certain roles, such as beach reconnaissance or long-range intelligence gathering, would, in a number of instances (such as the LRDG, COPPs or Alamo Scouts), actually dramatically underline the need for the creation of a special unit in the first instance. In an offensive capacity too, specialist formations offered the potential for mounting operations against targets that airpower could not attack with requisite accuracy, or without heavy losses. Such limitations were the

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[17] Foot (1984), p.249
[18] Weiss, pp.122

prime motivations in using specialist formations for the conduct of such operations as the Commando raid on St. Nazaire or, on a smaller scale, the RMBPD 'Frankton' raid.

The efficiency of aerial bombardment over the merits of sabotage or *coup de main* attacks by irregular elements is particularly open to debate. Critical of the inaccuracy of aerial bombardment, OSS officer Franklin Lindsay stated:

> .... a large number of bombs had to be delivered to ensure that one or two hit the target. .... if one could get next to the target and plant the explosives by hand right on the most vulnerable parts of, for example, a bridge, the probability of its destruction could be increased greatly and the explosives used would be a tiny fraction of that used in aerial bombardment.[19]

As well as being potentially more damaging because of its accuracy, and offering the benefit of fewer civilian casualties through indiscriminate destruction, sabotage also represented a more moderate outlay in men and materials, and had the further advantage, providing insertion of specialist groups and equipment did not greatly imperil aircraft, of offering a lower-risk solution. As Courtney of the SBS emphasised: 'Weigh the possible loss of two men in a canoe against one or more bomber aircraft in an attack on a railway bridge and you have an example of cost-efficiency'.[20] Despite this, Foot would assert that there were 'only a few' instances in which sabotage could be seen 'as a superior instrument to mass bombing', and cited the examples of the raid on Vemork hydro-electric plant (yet even this was eventually repaired and had to be attacked by the USAAF), and the attack on Montbéliard whereby a team of SOE and French partisans did 'what several squadrons of bombers could not' and sabotaged a tank turret factory to place it out of action for the duration.[21]

It is neither possible nor practicable to argue that special operations were a superior tool to airpower. They had neither the reach nor the destructive potential that mass bombing had. Airpower, particularly in the later stages of war when superiority was attained, could reach many targets 'both easier and with a much greater devastating effect' (albeit with potentially greater losses) than small groups of men could ever hope to achieve. Allied aerial and naval superiority in the later stages of the war were actually a clear reason for a number of special forces (most notably those concerned

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[19] Lindsay, p.72
[20] Courtney (1983), p.279
[21] Foot (1981), p.176

with maritime sabotage) remaining largely unemployed.[22] Despite these factors, it remains clear that on occasions special operations could provide a potentially less costly and more accurate alternative, or ancillary, to the use of airpower. Such was part of the inherent value of special operations capabilities: they expanded options and increased the Allied repertoire of response.[23] Such debates become, however, somewhat redundant when one considers how reliant, particularly in the later stages of the war, specialist formations became on the utilisation of aerial and naval resources.

The demands which certain special operations could make upon overstretched operational resources were not in anyway modest. The strain which they placed on shipping, submarines and aircraft to facilitate transportation, reinforcement and supply could be quite exacting. The effort taken to mount even a very minor operation could be quite considerable. Operation 'Anklet' of December 1941, for example, was a small diversionary raid (for the benefit of the larger Lofotens action) involving three troops of No.12 Commando and attached Norwegians. Yet to mount this operation required the direct committal of one destroyer, one corvette and one infantry landing ship and their crews, plus a much larger escort to the target comprising one cruiser, seven more destroyers, one more corvette, three minesweepers, two submarines, two oilers and an additional infantry carrier.[24] Various other special operations, particularly those which occurred at depth, would require a similar committal of regular forces to support and facilitate them. Thus whilst a special operation may itself only involve a seemingly cost-effective handful of men, there were often numerous 'hidden costs' involved which must not be ignored.

The diversion or risk of active-service craft, and their crews, dramatically increased the cost of mounting special operations and, at times, can be considered to have been counter-productive to their inherently low-cost virtues of execution. Early irritant commando raids of negligible value, it can be argued, did not often attain results commensurate with the expenditure and risk of scarce resources utilised in their conduct (the Commandos themselves inclusive). Perhaps the most contentious diversion of active-service craft came in the form of utilising both submarines and heavy bombers for the transport of special forces; activities which not only placed both

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[22] OSS Executive Committee recommendations, 'OSS Underwater Swimming Activities in UK', 22 June 1944, RG 226, Entry 148, Box 82; Folder 1198
[23] Gray (1996), p.169
[24] Admiralty orders for 'Anklet', December 1941, ADM 116/4381

the craft and their crews at risk, but also diverted them away from their regular activities, which could potentially be of ultimately greater value to the war than the special operation which they were facilitating. Cruickshank, for instance, went as far as calling operation 'Jaywick', the successful September 1943 SRD raid on Japanese shipping in Singapore Harbour, both 'insignificant' and 'counter-productive' because of its diversion of submarines which, at the time, were regularly accounting for a greater tonnage of Japanese shipping than the raid itself had achieved.[25] Despite this, so long as the submarine was not subservient to the course of the special operation, such costs could be distinctly lessened. Understanding this, the Admiralty would insist in 'combining clandestine operations with normal submarine patrols' so that units such as the SBS would be used if, and when, an opportunity presented itself over the course of a submarine's regular patrol.[26] In this manner the specialist units complemented rather than detracted from the submarine's own activities.

If opportunities for active-service craft to deploy in their principal occupations were not present, however, their use in special operations became, if no less of a risk, certainly more of an adequate arrangement.[27] The use of dedicated landing craft, transport aircraft, and even the diversion of bomber aircraft in special operations at times when those resources were not required elsewhere can, providing that they were not lost or diverted for protracted periods, be generally viewed as an acceptable use of resources and being of no real detriment to other operations. Even at times when these resources were of potential use elsewhere, special operations would generally only represent a minor and fleeting diversion of effort. This contention is backed up by a SHAEF report written on the eve of the commencement of D-Day, which stated:

> Whilst it is undesirable as a general principle to divert strategic air effort from bombing enemy communications .... The small number of heavy day bomber sorties required for the support of Resistance when taken in relation to the overall air effort available will interfere little, if at all, with the strategic air operations.[28]

In spite of this contention, the active support of armed indigenous guerrilla movements would represent the greatest diversion of resources and the greatest material costs of special operations. Absorbing significant amounts of weapons and stores, these

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[25] Cruickshank (1983), p.250
[26] Roosevelt Vol.II, p.397
[27] 260th SEAC Meeting, 8 July 1945, WO 203/131
[28] SHAEF, 'Development of Resistance in France', 4 July 1944, AIR 20/8945

activities would also tie up numerous Allied aircraft, crews and ground personnel in their dispatch. The infrastructure this required was extensive and the cost could dwarf the physical needs of Allied special forces alone.[29] In light of the fact that the effectiveness of partisan formations could, as has been noted, differ significantly, the maintenance and supply of indigenous movements cannot always be considered to have been cost-effective. Confusion in policy over which guerrilla movements to support could lead, as in Greece and Yugoslavia, to a degree of wastage, duplication of effort, or the resources being delivered into the wrong hands. In places, much time, money and effort was spent arming indigenous groups whose military impact was negligible at best.

Contrary to this, however, and providing vivid illustration of the worth of such a policy are the successes of armed indigenous forces in the Burmese theatre. Although the cost of Detachment 101's operations, for instance, were not immoderate with their dispatch of over 1,500,000lbs of supplies into the field each month also requiring much diversion of effort, given their successes, however, they certainly appear to have been warranted.[30] The Detachment, and the over 10,000 Kachin Rangers which they would eventually organise, remained a sound investment capable of an arguably disproportionate return. As Hilsman would state as regards to his own Kachin Ranger 'battalion':

> In terms of cost-effectiveness, it cannot be doubted that the guerrilla efforts of OSS Detachment 101 were a resounding success. For our battalion, the cost had been the commitment of three Americans and one Englishman, pay and supplies for three hundred guerrillas, C-47s and crews to supply us, and radio and administrative personnel at headquarters. The intelligence we gathered alone would have justified such small costs many times over.[31]

The issue of the 'cost' of specialist formations, in terms of both manpower and resources, is inherently linked to the issue of scale; and, as a rule, the larger the formation, the greater the cost. The fact that commando and ranger formations would operate in battalion and brigade strengths thus inherently opened them up to more criticisms than those commonly directed at special forces.[32] Even Slim remained optimistic about units that were '.... designed to be employed in small parties, usually

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[29] See: Sacquety, Troy J., 'Supplying the Resistance', *Veritas*, Vol.3, No.1, (2007), pp.37-48, and documents, AIR 20/8945;
[30] Hilsman, pp.297-298
[31] *Ibid.*, pp.289-290
[32] Gray (1996), p.167

behind the enemy, on tasks beyond the normal scope of warfare in the field. .... Not costly in manpower, they may, if handled with imaginative ruthlessness, achieve strategic results'.[33] Although most special forces remained subservient to the tactical maxim of small-scale in operational deployments, it does not necessarily follow, however, that both individually and collectively they did not absorb a significant proportion of manpower and resources. Of the previous estimates made on the relative numbers of personnel within British and US specialist forces in 1944, special forces accounted for approximately 3,870 and 4,525 men respectively, and the proportion of men in some units, such as the SAS Brigade, OSS Detachment 101, or the UDTs, would ultimately exceed the numbers of personnel involved in certain commando formations.[34]

It is undoubtedly true that the small-scale of the LRDG and Alamo Scouts was a central factor in their exemplary cost-effectiveness, but would this have been retained had their establishments been expanded? It would be easy to assume that providing more men, vehicles, and weapons to a fully employed force would lead to a proportionate increase in their successes. Although the LRDG, for example, may well have achieved more had it been expanded by a patrol or two, to retain overall cost-effectiveness, however, the enlarged formation would have to have been deployed as frequently, and with the same margins of success, as the original personnel were. One only needs to look at the underemployed Indian Long Range Squadron in the later stages of the Desert War to see that the expansion of the LRDG concept had its limits. There is a definite 'cut off point' in scale and too much expansion risked these formations becoming less 'special' and could potentially subvert their inherent virtues of ease of operation, economy of effort, flexibility and autonomy, and thus limit their chances for correct employment. Part of the reason that the LRDG and Alamo Scouts remained so cost-effective was that they were perpetually kept to a modest size.

The SAS provides an ideal case study for an assessment of the relative merits of the expansion of a special force. Within the space of only three years the SAS grew from a tiny force of some sixty men at its inception into a multinational brigade with a strength of approximately 2,500 men by mid-1944. Their earliest operations in the desert were, without doubt, very cost-effective. Their destruction of aircraft alone '...

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[33] Slim, p.548
[34] See Appendix II.

far outweighed the personal score achieved by any aircrew, whose training was both long and costly, and who attacked in expensive aircraft maintained by a large number of ground crew'.[35] It was these very successes that led to the SAS, in late-1942, gaining a Regimental establishment. Yet as a Regiment, in the later stages of the Desert War, the SAS began to show diminished results and an increase in casualties, Lloyd Owen would claim that the SAS 'balance sheet showed too great an excess of expenditure over achievement.'[36] This modest downturn in cost-effectiveness (which still did not subvert the overall value of the unit) was, however, not a result of the physical expansion of the unit (although rapid expansion in an active campaign did lead to the cutting of some corners in the training of new recruits), but rather by situational changes resulting from a better prepared enemy, shortened enemy lines of communication, and a more hostile environment. Even with higher losses, however, these later operations generally remained of value; their results being at least proportionate with investment.

The value of 2nd SAS Regiment's operations in North Africa and Italy in 1943 were, however, somewhat more debatable. Despite William Stirling's optimistic estimates that a widespread deployment of his Regiment in small groups would be 'very economical to mount' and be capable of dramatic results, his Regiment was not given the opportunity to test his theories in any more than a token form.[37] Instead, either broadly underemployed, or facing employment in a more conventional capacity, the actual value of the 2nd SAS at this time must be regarded as minimal and, in light of this, not particularly cost-effective.

Whilst the expansion of the SAS into brigade-strength in preparation for the invasion of France would increase the potential for their achievement, it also dramatically increased the cost of the unit in terms of personnel, resources, and supporting infrastructure. The eventual combat record of the SAS Brigade in France, nevertheless, makes for impressive reading: over the course of 49 operations in which 1,987 men were dispatched (850 of which British), 7,753 enemy casualties were inflicted and 4,764 prisoners taken (excluding larger numbers who surrendered in conjunction with larger Resistance activities); over 400 vehicles were destroyed or seized (some accounts place this figure around 1,000); numerous railway lines and roads were cut,

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[35] Thompson (1998), p.420
[36] Owen, D.L. (2003), p.120
[37] W. Stirling to 15 Army Group, 1 December 1943, WO 204/1949

and trains, bridges, telephone lines etc. thereon destroyed. These results were achieved, however, with notable casualties to the SAS Brigade which, excluding 4th SAS, sustained 345 men killed, missing or captured and 115 wounded in action.[38] Even with these losses, and the greater expenditure in manpower and resources taken up, or diverted, in mounting these operations, it is clear that the results achieved justified the expenditure. In these later activities the SAS would remain cost-effective, even if not as startlingly so as they had been during their first year in the Desert War.

The use of the OSS OGs in France represented a much more modest effort than the employment of the SAS Brigade, but in terms of tangible achievements would produce a proportionately similar return. Undertaking only fourteen deployments, in which a total of 27 officers and 155 men were employed, the OGs claimed, in conjunction with the Resistance to have killed 461 of the enemy, wounded that number again, and to have taken 10,021 prisoners.[39] The OGs would, however, achieve these returns at a much reduced cost as compared to the SAS, sustaining losses of only five men killed, 23 wounded and one missing in action.[40] A comparison of the relative achievements of these two units, whilst not necessarily proper (in light of the variations in the methods and manner of their operation) does, nevertheless, highlight that an expansion of a specialist formation, or at least a moderate increase to brigade-strength, did not necessarily result in diminished returns, but rather that they stayed broadly proportionate. Expansion of a specialist formation, so long as it occurs in response to a definite potential for deployment, is not necessarily to the detriment of cost-effectiveness.

Opportunity for deployment is, however, a pre-requisite of cost-effectiveness, and disuse of specialist formations represents potentially the most damning waste of resources. To remain valuable, and therefore be cost-effective, specialist formations had to be consistently used; that this was not always the case added to the arguments of their detractors. Thomas has disparagingly noted the persistent 'disparity between the sophistication of commando training and the high quality of commando units, on the

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[38] 'Summary of Casualties Inflicted on the Enemy by SAS Troops during Operations in 1944', KCLMA McLeod; and Lieutenant-Colonel Collins, 'Report on SAS Operations', 1 December 1944, WO 204/2020

[39] At this late stage in the war in Europe 'surrender' tallies should be taken in moderation as being less a reflection of any particular virtuosity and more a comment on the morale of the enemy.

[40] OG Command, 'History of Operations in Southern France', 20 September 1944, RG 226, Entry 143, Box 11

one hand, and the insignificance of the objectives assigned to these units and the limited tactical employment of commando forces in general, on the other.' [41] The example of the FSSF provides solid illustration of the greater complexities of this argument. Outwardly the results of the Force's deployments appear to have been very cost-effective. In addition to facilitating operational manoeuvre in Italy the unit, numbering approximately 2,500 men, has been accredited with 12,000 enemy killed and the capture of upwards of 7,000 prisoners; figures which suggest that one commando force alone accounted for almost the same number of the enemy as the total number of Allied personnel involved in specialist formations in mid-1944.[42] Despite such favourable calculations, it is, nevertheless, legitimate to ask, in light of its extensive arctic, airborne, and amphibious training being of only marginal tangible use (such as in scaling Monte la Difensa, or in the capture of Ile du Levant and Ile de Port Cros prior to Dragoon), whether the cost and time of this training, which kept the Force unemployed for over a year, was worth the outlay? Dziuban doubts that it was, highlighting that the Force 'engaged but little in the highly specialised types of operations for which it had been trained' and yet it 'represented a costly expenditure of resources and a complex administrative effort, particularly to Canada because of the force's distance from Canadian administrative machinery'.[43]

Although the rigorous training which the FSSF underwent was of little specific application, it was not, however, entirely wasted. It formed the foundations for the Force's successes; it moulded the unit into a cohesive whole and provided them with a skill-at-arms exceptionally valuable for their first deployments. Monte la Difensa would certainly have not been taken and held as efficiently as it was, were it not for such intensive training.[44] Cohesion, however, rarely survives attrition, and once they had sustained heavy casualties the Force's fighting effectiveness, commensurate with other formations, such as the 1st Rangers by Cisterna, naturally declined. The only way to subvert this and maintain the quality of the instrument would be to take formations out of 'the line' for recruiting and retraining etc.. This was a fact well understood by the British, who had expanded their commando organisation specifically to provide

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[41] Thomas, p.696
[42] McMichael, p.209; Springer, pp.255-256
[43] Dziuban, pp.267-268
[44] Springer, pp.68; 84-85

'sufficient' formations 'so as to allow for wastage and rest between operations'.[45] In light of the exigencies of the battlefield, however, such a policy was rarely applicable.

The value and cost-effectiveness of even proportionately much smaller formations is equally reliant upon correct and consistent deployment. There are various examples of special forces which, although remaining of modest scale, can face the charges of being expensive, redundant, and underemployed. The excessive proliferation of certain maritime special forces each with diverse niche roles, in particular, has left a proportion of them open to such criticisms. The RMBPD had somewhat limited operational deployment and only two notable successes (the crippling of two destroyers to facilitate a raid on Simi being of more significance than the sinking of blockade runners during the audacious 'Frankton'), and it is certainly debatable whether those operations alone justified the time, equipment and personnel taken up in forming the unit. Of even less cost-effectiveness was the SRU. Despite being one of the smallest independent units created during the war, with just over forty men in its establishment, the Unit underwent over two years of extensive and expensive training in California, Nassau and Britain before eventually being sent to Ceylon in October 1944.[46] The unit was not operationally deployed until February 1945, and whilst of use at this time, most clearly in performing reconnaissance for XXXIII Corps, it was soon made redundant after only one month by the crossing of the Irrawaddy.[47] The proportion of time and money spent on training the Unit contrasted negatively with their modest successes and time in the field to make the unit, despite its small scale, not particularly cost-effective.

The excessive proliferation in Britain of disparate maritime special forces each with niche offensive roles cannot be considered cost-effective. Until these units became centralised under the branches of SBU, SOG or DDOD(I) each would also make additional demands upon individual training, experimental and administrative resources and would spend excessive time and money in developing new methods and equipment which, for the most part, had little wartime application and can thus be considered 'a complete waste of time'.[48] Furthermore, in light of their limited operational deployments, it could well be argued that the tasks undertaken by these

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[45] War Office memorandum on 'Points brought out in Ops. "Husky"', WO 201/799
[46] Wright, p.158
[47] 260th SEAC Meeting, 8 July 1945, WO 203/131
[48] Thompson (1998), p.420; Parker (1998), p.99

units could have easily been catered for by an existent, versatile and equally small-scale formation such as the SBS which certainly was cost-efficient.

These arguments are not necessarily isolated to Britain, however, and although the US development of offensive maritime formations all under the aegis of the OSS MU certainly was more cost-effective than the cumbersome British approach, the wartime application of many MU personnel (aside from the 'Italian' branch and those later converted to UDTs) was slight. The 'London', 'North African' and 'Far Eastern' branches of the MU, in particular, were constantly hindered by a lack of opportunity for employment and inadequate transportation. Illustrative of the frustrations proportions of the MU faced are comments made by (the ironically named) Lieutenant-Commander A.G. Atwater, the SEAC MU Chief, in May 1945:

> We have approximately 43 personnel that have been training for over a year. They have been here almost a year and the work has been nil. A certain amount of jobs were found in the Arakan show but it did not require personnel who were trained as specialists; in fact, the specialist training was a drawback due to difficulties in utilising this type of personnel for regular duties.[49]

At practically all times these niche-skilled maritime formations were in stiff competition for employment with other formations with a similar mandate. Redundancy and competition resulted from having too many similar units and not enough opportunity for their employment. Colonel H.T. Tollemache, CO of SOG, emphasised these problems well when he reflected that:

> Neither functions nor general methods [between units] have been markedly dissimilar. ... The differences consequent of this independent function, in technique, in composition and in organisation have resulted in lack of economy both in personnel and stores due to each type of team "running its own show" and to maintaining establishments designed for one theatre while operating in another.[50]

There existed a thin line between a specialist formation being suitably 'specialised' and justifying its existence by fulfilling a role that no other force could perform, and it becoming too specialised and risk becoming inapplicable to the wider war should the unique circumstances for their use never, or too infrequently, appear. Overspecialised forces are not desirable; they lose their inherent flexibility and therefore much of their

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[49] Lieutenant-Commander Atwater to Colonel Bigelow, Washington, 26 May 1945, RG 226, Entry 92, Box 491; Folder 16

[50] Colonel Tollemache, 'Lessons learnt from formation of SOG', 1 October 1945, DEFE 2/1203

potential application. As Laycock wrote after the war, 'the answer to the question as to whether or not you require "specialist" troops for raiding is "Yes". But the lesson is: don't raise too many; don't form odd units for odd jobs, because if they are worth their salt, they ought to be quite capable of carrying out any particular type of raid.'[51]

The 'mushroom growth of all sorts of these organisations' during the war risked undermining some of their inherent claims to cost-effectiveness. Too many specialist formations, and too little divergence in role, meant that resources were wasted as units were not employed as designed.[52] Extensive proliferation not only undermined the strength of the conventional arms but also impacted negatively upon the quality and efficiency of other specialist units, spreading too thinly those individuals with a real flair for the conduct of irregular operations and, more significantly, leading to duplication of effort, confusion, and competition for missions and resources. Ideally Britain would have not needed to have established such a diverse range of offensive maritime formations, nor would the US needed to have created the UDTs, NCDUS, USMC Reconnaissance Battalions, S&Rs, and elements of the MU, all operating independently with overlapping mandates.[53] That these formations were prone to develop with significant overlap was a natural consequence of adopting small units, which so often developed in an *ad hoc* manner, to deal with the exigencies of a global war. Inter-theatre requirements and, often more significantly, inter-service (or inter-agency) confusions directly led to a degree of duplication of effort and ergo a degree of redundancy.[54]

One of the fundamental maxims that determined the creation of specialist formations was that they were to perform tasks which regular forces either would, or could, not carry out within the same constrains of time and space or without sustaining disproportionate losses. It follows, therefore, that some of the most acute criticisms of specialist units are based on the assertion that their creation was redundant because, as Slim stated, 'Any well-trained infantry battalion should be able to do what a commando can do; in the Fourteenth Army they could and did'.[55] When specialist

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[51] Laycock, R. E., 'Raids in the Late War and their lessons', *Journal of the RUSI*, (November 1947), No.568, Vol.XCII, pp.528-540

[52] Lloyd Owen, *The larder was often bare*, [Unpublished memoir] in IWM PP/MCR/C13

[53] O'Dell (2000), p.21

[54] O'Dell (2005), pp.36-40

[55] Slim, pp.546-547. It is interesting to note that commando formations would occasionally direct similar sentiments towards special forces. Prior to the formation of the 2nd SAS Regiment, for

formations undertook more conventional roles such arguments against their proliferation would increase, almost irrespective of any successes attained in such occupations. For example, as late as May 1945 the War Office stated that if Commandos were to be employed in Brigade strength complete with Administration units, it 'would appear that normal Infantry Brigades on light scales would meet requirements equally well'.[56] In such circumstances the high casualties of certain special operations would give additional ammunition to their detractors. Units such as the Marauders, for example, had a very high rate of wastage, and it is hard to avoid the fact that at the time of their operations in Burma, as General Auchinleck stated in regards to the Chindits, 'Infantry in normal formations having proper Artillery and other support are defeating Japs and sustain far fewer casualties'.[57]

In Burma there were numerous examples of British and Indian field formations undertaking tasks which approached those which were conducted by commando formations when deployed more conventionally. As part of the reforms taken after the First Burma Campaign to train and prepare British and Indian forces in jungle warfare, a number of programmes were instigated which sought to teach irregular techniques to certain field formations. The 17th Indian Division, for example, would take steps to become a 'Storm Troop Division' and, requesting COHQ documents to help the process, allotted the 16th, 48th and 63rd Brigades the specialised roles of acting as 'shock troops in support of tanks and against strong points'; 'jungle warfare shock troops'; and 'Combined operations and river shock troops' respectively. In addition, it was expected that each battalion would form a 'shock platoon' from handpicked men that would attend 'Commando Camps' and who would be capable of 'special tasks'.[58] These activities should not, however, be viewed as part of any real desire to develop independent irregular warfare capabilities, but rather as an effort to better adapt these formations to the requirements of the campaign in Burma, to instigate pathfinder and short-range divisional reconnaissance companies, and provide troops with experience and an opportunity to engage with the enemy.

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example, the SS Brigade had claimed 'we cannot agree that the role of SAS differs from that which could be fulfilled by any well trained Commando'. General Haydon to CCO, January 1943, DEFE 2/957

[56] War Office to C-in-C India, May 1945, WO 203/4594

[57] C-in-C India to SACSEA, January 1945, WO 203/3426

[58] 17th Indian Division Training Instruction No.2, 24 June 1942, WO 172/475; 63rd Indian Brigade Training Instruction No.4, 4 September 1942, WO 172/601

It was in a similar manner that both the 3rd and 34th US Infantry Divisions would form 'raider platoons' amongst some of their regiments. These platoons, and the likes of the Scout-Sniper platoons as formed by the USMC in Guadalcanal, did not represent specialist units as much as they did a cadre of experienced and willing volunteers who could be called upon to undertake tactically difficult or dangerous (but quite conventional) operations for the immediate benefit of their field formations.[59] In fact, because of their volunteer and somewhat *ad hoc* nature, these units were often 'over worked' being prone to be 'sent on too many missions without adequate rest' and were often called upon to hastily undertake operations without having had adequate time to plan and prepare. Furthermore, because these units tended to undertake a disproportionate share of the more hazardous tasks assigned to a regiment, the ability for all ranks in that regiment to gain experience was lessened with potentially detrimental ramifications for its quality as a whole.[60]

That conventional formations on occasions sought to develop their own organic elite-light infantry capabilities was largely reactionary to operational requirements and denigrates neither the value nor cost-effectiveness of specialist formations dedicated to undertaking similar activities. In a sense the existence of these kinds of formations amongst conventional units is a direct complement to specialist formations as innovators. As Eliot Cohen has emphasised, 'a light infantry unit may perform tasks similar to those of conventional units, but its separate existence is justified by its ability to inject fresh thinking into the mainstream of military thought'.[61] It will not be forgotten that endemic to the US perception of specialist formations was the mentality that once training (and even operational deployment) was completed, the personnel would be returned, either as a whole or on a rotational basis, to conventional units to disseminate information and act as instructional troops. In the instances of the 29th Rangers as well as both the Alamo Scout and S&R Schools this theory was put into practice.

McMichael has argued that because of a 'relative scarcity of legitimate missions for specialised forces', the formation of these units should have been limited. He further contended that when 'specialised operations are necessary, they can be undertaken by

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[59] Twining, p.134
[60] Ranger Training Centre Staff Study, 'Ranger Type Units', 26 December 1950, RG 319, G-3 Operations Records Section, Decimal File, 322 Ranger, Box 380
[61] Cohen, pp.31-32

conventional units provided with special training prior to the operations'.[62] Although this argument appears to have some resonance when the 'misuse' of certain commando-style formations in protracted defensive infantry duties is considered, in application to the majority of specialist tasks, however, it is quite erroneous. To have made widespread use of conventional forces to undertake specialist roles would have taken up a significant proportion of time and resources and would certainly not have been in anyway cost-free. Teaching regular formations irregular skills would have been potentially wasteful and risked distracting them from their primary, and war-winning, occupations.[63] As Dudley Clarke was keen to emphasise in defence of the Commandos, they were initially created as separate units precisely so as to avoid the disruption or diversion of any normal unit from their pressing tasks of mainland defence.[64]

Although regular formations could, and with training did, undertake a number of roles synonymous with specialist formations – such as spearheading amphibious landings, performing overland infiltration, or undertaking the occasional raid – it is certainly possible to argue, as many of those involved in the planning of special operations have, that even these more 'simplistic' operations still required 'a special technique, a special temperament. ... Each individual ... must possess special qualifications which are not normally found in regular units and which it is not really practical to teach them.'[65] Furthermore, it is quite incorrect to assume that all regular soldiers with, or without, a degree of unique instruction could have been relied upon for the conduct of certain specialist roles of a particular complexity (such as intelligence operations, beach reconnaissance and pilotage, sabotage, or partisan liaison) without dramatically sacrificing results. To have relied upon regular formations with only a modicum of extracurricular training for the conduct of specialist operations would likely have resulted in numerous difficulties. With no standing special operations capabilities, the time taken to have raised organic specialist parties from regular formations in response to a specific opportunity would have dramatically decreased the potential operational speed of response and may well have led to missed opportunities. Peter Young of the Commandos would admit, 'Any infantry can do our job', but would sum up one of the

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[62] McMichael, p.211
[63] Laycock, p.529
[64] Clarke, 'The Start of "Commandos"', 30 October 1942, DEFE 2/4
[65] Laycock, 'Memorandum on reorganisation of Commandos', 13 November 1941, WO 201/731

key benefits of the Commandos by stating that 'only we ... can do it in the time allotted'.[66]

If utilising regular elements for the conduct of specialist tasks, it would have been essential to have called for volunteers, and desirable to subsequently subject them to a 'weeding out' process, lest mentally and physically unsuited men subvert the chances of success. Further, considering the often *ad hoc* manner in which a number of 'private armies' were raised during the war, the net result of any attempt to develop specialist capabilities within regular formations in a short space of time would have likely resulted in something approaching the earliest specialist formations anyway, but probably lacking the greatly significant flair and drive of an 'errant captain' at the helm. Any such regular unit so converted would also likely have lacked a clear mandate, had a much reduced freedom of action, would likely have confused regular command and control channels, and would have likely have been open to an abuse and misapplication of its budding abilities because of its 'regular' identity. In addition, if having performed an operation the personnel were to be returned to their company or regiment etc., experience and *esprit de corps* would be sacrificed, and should a future requirement for a special operation emerge, it would have been necessary to have taken the lengthy and wasteful step of having to recruit another band for its conduct.

The potential limitations of using regular forces to undertake specialist roles are most succinctly highlighted by David Lloyd Owen of the LRDG. He stated:

> I would willingly have undertaken many of the tasks we carried out with the men of a regular unit. But I could not have done it without rejecting those who were not physically fit, those who were not temperamentally suited and those who were not prepared to parachute. Then I would have had to train them – for the mental strain of being constantly on the watch is something for which continual training is required. .... To have tried this type of raid and other tasks without specially trained and selected men would have been madness. For not only would you virtually destroy the structure of a normal unit in transforming it for a specialised task but also you would be diverting it from its main purpose.[67]

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[66] Quoted in Saunders, p.350. Tom Churchill, wartime CO of 2nd SS Brigade, well illustrated this point: 'A [regular] battalion can, in a month or two, be trained to step out of landing craft and to perform *specific* tasks, on a specific beach ... but it would require at least a year's training to enable it to compete with successive and differing tasks ... assigned to the Commandos'. Churchill, T.B., 'The Value of Commandos', *Journal of the RUSI*, (February 1950), No.577, Vol.XCL, p.87

[67] Lloyd Owen, *The larder was often bare*, [Unpublished memoir] in IWM PP/MCR/C13

That specialist formations arose as they did was no accident. They were created in direct response to the undesirability and limitations of utilising conventional arms for the conduct of irregular and specialised operations. This point should not be forgotten.

Although not all specialist deployments were of low cost and significant value, their conduct did require specially organised formations. Those essential roles such as intelligence gathering or beach reconnaissance, tasks of great benefit to the application of conventional force, required practitioners trained, equipped and suited to the particular rigours of that work. Many operations would have been conducted at a disadvantage, or with increased losses, had specialist formations not been formed to facilitate these tasks. Even though the tasks of liaison with partisans and harassment in depth were not, strictly speaking, essential, they remained generally beneficial and similarly required special selection, temperament and training. Specialist formations arose to fulfil a genuine need: to conduct operations that regular formations could not adequately undertake in the time available without significant disruption. So long as a requirement for specialist operations was identified, there was little alternative to the creation of specialist formations for their conduct. It would have been significantly more costly, and would have resulted in much diminished results, had regular formations with specialist training been relied upon for such purposes.

Colonel Twohig has claimed that much of the 'suspicion' of the 'private army' was caused by the 'disinclination to disband, and the consequent search for a justifying role'.[68] In terms of cost-effectiveness the policy adopted towards the disbandment of formations is almost as significant as was the policy of proliferation and expansion. Corresponding with their differing military cultures and approach towards the establishment of specialist formations, Britain and the United States also had markedly different approaches towards their wartime disbandment. Throughout the war the British steadily increased the number of both commando and special forces within their ranks: as late as 1943 they remained committed to doubling the number of Commandos (organising the Royal Marine Commandos for this purpose); by 1944 they were content to expand existent formations (such as with the SAS Brigade); and as late as 1945 they were still establishing new units (as with Royal Marine Detachment 385). The steady growth of British formations is illustrative both of their

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[68] Twohig, Lieutenant-Colonel, J. P. O'Brien, 'Are Commandos Really Necessary?', *Army Quarterly*, (October 1948), Vol.LVII, No.1, p.88

continued complicity with irregular solutions as well as their propensity to view specialist formations as an investment which they were generally unwilling to disband whilst the war continued.

The US were, on the other hand, much more willing to disband their formations once they ceased to be considered cost-effective, or when it was believed that conventional operations could proceed reliant on the virtues of mass and firepower, without the need for redundant 'sideshows' offered by special operations. As many US formations were established with a clear mandate for being 'temporary' or 'provisional' in nature, this course of action was as initially intended. Aside from the 2nd, 5th and 6th Rangers, the US disbanded all of their ranger formations well before the closing stages of war. The reasons for these decisions varied but had at their core cost-effectiveness calculations. The Marauders and the 1st, 3rd and 4th Rangers were disbanded because they were so mauled in their deployments that it was not thought practicable, or necessary, to reform units around the remnants of these formations. The 29th Rangers were disbanded, as intended, to disseminate the experiences of their Commando training to the 29th Infantry Division; although in light of the subsequent creation of the 2nd and 5th Rangers this move was rather wasteful. The USMC Raiders were disbanded both because the opportunity for their employment in the Central Pacific was unlikely, and because the manpower they took up was (because of the manpower 'cap' on the USMC) impeding the creation of further marine divisions.[69] Whilst the FSSF was disbanded both because of complications with the Canadian contingent, whose manpower shortage was particularly acute, and also because of the assumption that by late-1944, following successful landings on France and the commencement of conventional operations, there would be no further call for their unique specialities.

Despite Britain having disbanded the Layforce Commandos in 1941 after their losses and having disbanded Nos.12 and 14 Commandos in early-1944 because of a presumed lack of requirement for small-scale amphibious raids, the British approach to wartime disbandment of commando formations was, on the whole, noticeably more moderate than that of the US. Heavy casualties and pressing manpower concerns did not necessarily deter the British from reconstituting and reinforcing formations, as seen with No.2 Commando's losses following St. Nazaire or those of Royal Marine 'A' (later No.40) Commando at Dieppe. Furthermore, the commando transition of role to

[69] Hogan, *Raiders*, p.83

elite light-infantry did not provoke the same hostility amongst the British as it did amongst the US towards ranger formations so that, consequently, the British were more willing than the US to integrate their Commando formations into their order of battle for conventional offensives. For the British, the culture of small wars and decentralised control, their distinct regimental traditions, and the unique 'errant captain' and 'champion' relationship,[70] would all combine to ensure that there was an almost sentimental reticence to dissolve units with identity or *esprit de corps*.

Throughout the war British Commandos continually outnumbered US ranger formations and it is apparent that the US did not seem to have understood, or agreed with, the British policy under which these units proliferated. As early as August 1942 OSS commentators touring the Commandos would report that Britain had formed too many Commandos. They would advise that instead of the twelve Commandos which (at that time) had been formed, six would have been preferable and two would have been sufficient. This assessment was made on the basis that after deployment 'the units are so badly shot up and lose so much equipment that the needed replacements take months to receive. The result is that the Commando unit makes an average of 2 raids in two years and the men go very sour in the interval. Two units could be kept replaced and kept up in condition'.[71] Whilst the transition to spearhead and elite infantry roles, cemented after the Sicilian invasion, prompted the formation of seven additional Royal Marine Commandos it only resulted in the correspondently moderate creation of two more Ranger battalions (excluding the 6th Rangers).

When the 1st and 3rd Rangers were decimated at Cisterna the US Army took the decision not to reconstitute them and, in so doing, also decided to disband the 4th Rangers. It was believed that the cost of reforming and reinforcing these battalions would not be commensurate with their utility, and that any further requirement for Ranger units was already catered for by the 2nd and 5th Rangers. Although certain individuals, General Marshall in particular, were keen to retain these battalions, the ultimate decision to disband them was taken on the basis of cost-effective calculations and the belief that at that stage of the war 'the general advantage of special trained

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[70] As Thompson has claimed: 'The personality of the commander of the force was often a deciding factor in prolonging a special unit's existence well beyond its useful operational life'. Thompson (1998), p.421

[71] Stacey Lloyd to Major Bruce, 5 August 1942, RG 226, Entry 92, Box 111, Folder 49

forces is not worth the effort spent in special organisation or training'.[72] The conclusion of a feasibility study on Rangers, tellingly made on the eve of D-Day and arguably the most significant Ranger contribution of the war, outlined perfectly the general perception of them being counter to the 'American way of war': it stated that offensive warfare required not heavily specialised groups, but the 'maximum use' of infantry battalions 'adapted to varied and sustained action'. It would conclude that: 'Limited possible employment for Ranger Battalions in present and prospective operations, special replacement problem, and consideration of manpower make the reactivation of these Ranger Battalions at this time a questionable investment in manpower'.[73] The US appears to have been much more conscious of the costs of specialist formations than were the British, and their decision to commonly discontinue ranger formations once their utility or purpose was called into question was arguably a more rational approach than that pursued by the more sentimental British.

Without foresight, however, the decision to disband such formations was by no means an easy one. Disbandment invariably ruins well-trained, cohesive and potentially experienced formations and, if future utility exists, it is almost always a waste. On the other hand, should no such obvious future employment exist, then disbandment is sometimes the only possible course of action lest a potentially large number of personnel are left unemployed, incapable of having impact on the course of the war; or risk being wasted in unsuitable tasks if deployment occurs for the sake of employment. Thus the decision to disband the FSSF, for example, following the successful invasion of France and the development of conventional offensives can, in light of the declining potential for such light-infantry formations, be considered a reasonable and cost-effective decision. At that stage, however, the future of the war in the Far East was far from resolved, and given the likely importance of amphibious actions in future operations against the Japanese, there was definite risk in prematurely disbanding well-motivated, cohesive, and experienced personnel that had already been of proven value in support of such activities.

In an unclear strategic situation, even when specialist formations were facing disuse or an alteration of role, not to disband a formation could be considered the more prudent

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[72] General Jacob Devers, AFHQ to War Department, 13 March 1944, RG 165, Entry 418, Box 682; Folder OPD 320.2, AFRICA Cases 584-616

[73] Major-General Thos T. Handy, Assistant Chief of Staff, 'Disposition of Ranger Battalions', 5 June 1944, in *Ibid.*

decision. For instance, whilst it would have been wasteful to have formed a special force to only perform the reconnaissance roles as undertaken by the SAS in North-West Europe in 1944-45, to have retained an existent and available formation for such deployments, however, was quite legitimate. To have not used, or to have disbanded, this experienced and cohesive formation at a time when a task existed which the unit was both willing and capable of undertaking would not have been making best use of their abilities. That the SAS continued to be deployed right up until the end of the war in Europe highlighted their versatility and their continued return on initial investment. In a climate of diminishing opportunities for employment, such issues certainly helped provide justification for the British retention of many of their specialist formations.

Assessing the value of specialist formations will always be fraught with problems. Within cost-effectiveness debates it is hard to avoid dubious 'what if...?' scenarios whereby conjectural questions such as 'What if the commandos had not been created?' only serve to promote further enquiry: 'Would the personnel taken up in their establishment have been better employed elsewhere?'; 'Would the results and benefits they accrued on the Allies have been achieved more effectively by other means?' etc.. Although specialist formations had a definite, albeit very small, impact on the course of events in the Second World War, these were not achieved without cost. Specialist formations did not offer a 'free lunch'.[74] On occasions specialist formations could reap significant impact for very little cost (in terms of personnel involved and diversion of effort), at other times they took time and money to establish; absorbed manpower and resources that could have been of benefit in other occupations; were underemployed; or unsuccessful in endeavours of little value. The value and cost-effectiveness of specialist formations varied widely, and turned on many calculations. Yet it is both proportionality (in the number of formations raised and the scale of each) and utility (the frequency, duration and significance of their use) that are perhaps the most significant considerations.

It is likely that specialist formations were not employed as much as they could have been during the war and, with more sensible tasking, it is certainly arguable that more value could have been gained from employment of these units. With this in mind, it is equally true that too many varieties of specialist formations were formed, each with a very specific niche that further impeded application. Special forces, particularly those

[74] Gray (1996), pp.147-148; 155; 169

maritime examples, although generally not taking up as many resources per unit as the commando formations, were not always cost-effective and their drain on personnel and resources was not always commensurate with results attained. Often rising as *ad hoc* expedients, as 'private armies', specialist formations were nascent creations developed without a rational plan for structure or organisation. That their proliferation, utility, and retention did not proceed along the most cost-conscious lines was hardly surprising on the basis of their embryonic nature. That there were flaws in their proliferation was inevitable, particularly for the British. Entering the war later and benefiting from the British example, the US was able to develop a more rational view of specialist operations and was able to undertake a more sensible, or professional, route to their proliferation, that identified what the requirements were, and resulted in the formation of a minimum of organisations for their conduct.

Had the concept of specialist formations or irregular warfare been a clearly established precedent before the war; had commanders and practitioners alike had a doctrinal point of reference upon which to refer, a more sensible procurement policy for specialist formations may have occurred. The Second World War was, however, the beginning of specialist formations as a coherent genus, and at all stages the development and use of these nascent creations was part of an evolutionary learning curve. As such it is important not to impose upon, or assume, a rational modern procurement policy forged with exigencies of peacetime budgets and knowledge of specialist forces and their missions. Special formations arose at different times, in different theatres, and because of different circumstances to fulfil varied roles, and thus their procurement, organisation and use was not always undertaken in the most rational or cost-effective manner.

At times specialist formations were expensive, were prone to misuse and disuse, and at times they were ineffective. Yet these problems were not exclusive to specialist formations: war is a wasteful endeavour and specialist formations were certainly no more wasteful in 'costs' than various other arms of service whose contribution is potentially more debatable. Contrasted to this, however, is the fact that at times specialist formations were able to remain true to the theory behind their existence, and carry out important and force-magnifying roles that achieved significant results disproportionate to the investment. Although not all formations were as cost-effective as one another, taken as a whole, the investment that Britain and the United States

made in the establishment and use of specialist formations was worthwhile. In regard to the damage inflicted upon the enemy and benefits accrued to the Allies, specialist formations were cost-effective. Simply put, their 'return' was greater than their 'investment'.

Conclusion

Having taken a holistic view of the rise, application and value of the Anglo-American commandos and special forces of the Second World War, it is evident that extensive innovatory and evolutionary processes were at play. To provide illustration of such trends it is, at this point, only necessary to undertake a brief chronological review of the course of events 1939-1945. Prior to the outbreak of war neither Britain nor the US had any coherent concept of special operations or any consistent plans to develop organisations or formations for its conduct. Aside from a handful of pre-war investigations on the subject, irregular warfare remained a generally ignored, and often distasteful, phenomenon thought to be confined to past colonial wars and frontier campaigns. It would be misleading, however, to view the absence of pre-war studies and initiatives in these fields as neglect: broadly considered, there was simply no pre-existent body of knowledge or practicable experience to neglect. When specialist formations arose during the Second World War they thus did so not following any overarching pre-existent concept, but instead stemmed directly from innovation (or assimilation) in response to opportunity and exigency. The absence of pre-war ideas and concepts would ultimately prove an impediment to neither Britain nor America's ability to, independently and jointly, successfully conceive, develop, and utilise an extensive range of specialist formations during the course of the war.

The first British specialist formations have their origins in the desperate summer of 1940. Innovation and *ad hoc* experimentation was a result of frustration and conventional weakness. Within a short space of time, and illustrative of the British enthusiasm towards these units, a number of 'errant captains' had swiftly proposed, and 'champions' supported, various unorthodox solutions. Specialist formations were naturally attractive. They offered a proportionately low-cost means through which the strategic initiative could be regained; they provided a mechanism though which amphibious and combat experience could be attained; and offered a focal point for the fortification of popular morale. The development of the Commandos, SOE and the 'private armies' of the LRDG and SBS all in the summer of 1940 was of paramount importance in laying the foundations for future irregular success. The years 1940-41 were, however, part of a formative learning period and many problems and limitations with the development and application of these formations were clearly evident. Whilst units such as the LRDG and SBS, and emerging units such as the SAS, were certainly

showing potential, this period also witnessed Commando formations experience a fair few failures and frustrations. Many of their early tribulations were inevitable, and stemmed both from inexperience and a more general inability to project force; they were broadly symptomatic of a sharp learning curve about virtually every aspect of the composition and use of irregular units. Britain was learning its trade and would surmount these difficulties only by trial and error.

In mid-1941 the US began its first tentative moves towards developing irregular warfare, clandestine intelligence and special operations capabilities. These investigations and developments, most significantly the creation of Donovan's COI, were noticeably aided and influenced by the British example, and would serve as a stepping stone for the development of the first American specialist formations soon after Pearl Harbor. In the overall evolution of specialist formations 1942 would prove to be a critical year. The year witnessed the apex of the amphibious raid with the prolific actions of the likes of Vaagso, St. Nazaire and, in the American instance, Makin, occurring alongside numerous smaller pinpricks executed by the likes of No.12 Commando and the SSRF. In spite of this, the year also bore witness to a more general decline of such operations as the commando and ranger role evolved away from independent raiding activities and towards directly supporting the amphibious landing of conventional arms. August 1942 was a turning point with the likes of Dieppe and Tulagi highlighting the potential of commando formations undertaking spearheading, flank guard and shock troop tasks. By the end of the year, operation 'Torch' had crystallised this transition of the commando and ranger role.

With commando formations being gradually drawn away from raiding activities, the mantle of special forces began to expand. By the end of 1942 special forces had become a clearly definable genre. Perhaps more than any other factor, it was the widespread successes and versatility of the LRDG and SAS in the Desert War and of the SBS in the Mediterranean which would lead to the expansion and legitimisation of units heretofore regarded as 'private armies'. These units had gradually illustrated their cost-effective potential in successfully conducting a range of offensive and non-offensive tasks with versatility and speed. Following the gradual development of dedicated command and control structures which managed to successfully coordinate the activities of such highly individualistic bodies, these units began to escape the

stigma of the 'private army' and became increasingly well integrated into the objectives of the overall military campaign.

1943 was a year of change and reorganisation for virtually all specialist formations as they began to alter their establishments and methods to cater for transitions in the overall strategic picture. By this stage of the war, commandos and rangers had proven their application in amphibious assaults and, with the ever-looming invasion of France at the forefront of Allied minds, the desirability of retaining, and even expanding, these formations had become solidified. The experience of North Africa and Sicily would nevertheless prove that in order to remain viable, these elite light-infantry formations must be prepared to undertake post-assault operations even if that meant, however distastefully, utilising them at the front in conventional infantry duties. To cater for such a requirement both the Commandos and Rangers would make alterations to their establishments. Broadly considered, the British were more amenable than the US in facilitating this reorganisation and in granting their Commandos a margin of legitimacy. Significantly, ranger formations were adversely affected by an unwillingness to create a comparable structure to the effective SS Brigades which helped to ease the integration of Commandos into the regular battle whilst still enabling the conduct of more independent activities where necessary. In direct contrast to the lessons emerging in Europe about the value of commando formations at this time, however, was the situation in the Pacific which saw the USMC Raiders becoming increasingly marginalised within the firepower-orientated amphibious doctrine as practiced by the US Navy/USMC.

For the various special forces the year of 1943 was also a period of transition and change. Following a number of tentative measures during 'Torch', the increasing volume of amphibious operations ensured that maritime-orientated specialist formations would steadily proliferate. 'Husky' would mark the first concerted use of special forces both before, and during, a landing to cater for hydrographic and beach intelligence, pilotage, approach demolitions, and deception activities. Yet in spite of the consistent deployments of the LRDG and SBS (Squadron) in the Aegean, or those of Detachment 101 in Burma, 1943 was a proportionately fallow year for special forces as they began to adjust to the requirements of supporting the Allied offensives in depth. Nascent American units like the OGs were still learning their trade, whilst more experienced British units such as the SAS needed to familiarise themselves with new

methods and different operational environments. Three principal factors impeded the widespread employment of special forces at this time: a lack of knowledge about their capabilities; a lack of means to facilitate their deployment; and, perhaps most significantly, a lack of practicable opportunity for their use. Despite the idealistic expectations of certain protagonists, the situation on the ground in 1943 was simply not ready for the committal of large numbers of uniformed special forces in depth.

The year 1944 represented the zenith of the use of specialist formations as a direct ancillary to conventional Allied strategy. The operations of Anzio, Normandy, 'Anvil'/'Dragoon' and Luzon would all see the employment of commando and ranger formations in support of conventional amphibious landings in either a spearheading capacity or, as was more common at this stage of the war, being used to secure flanks or important outlying objectives. Following these events, however, once beachheads had been secured, American enthusiasm towards ranger formations (with the exception of the Marauders and 6th Rangers) declined as problems were faced in accommodating these units in post-assault tasks. Britain, on the other hand, faced no comparable difficulties and continued to broadly utilise their Commandos in a wide variety of important tasks until the end of the war.

As contrasted to the gradual downturn in ranger deployments, 1944 was the year in which special forces really began exhibiting their potentials in both independent operations and working in direct support of conventional forces. The invasion of France, the Italian campaign, the peripheral actions in Greece and Yugoslavia, the offensives in Burma, and the Central and Southwest Pacific amphibious drives occurring at this time would all witness the concerted application of special forces. From the summer of 1944 onwards, the distinct acceleration in the activities of indigenous partisan movements in support of major Allied offensives resulted in a concomitant increase in the application of special forces to harness, control and aid these indigenous elements. As this occurred, greater controls and increasingly centralised, and often inter-allied, command structures developed to cater for the increased volume and complexity of operations. The development of 'special operations' branches under various theatre and subordinate commands from 1944 onwards increased the effective application of these units and serves as evidence of a marked evolution in the acceptance and integration of special forces into Allied operations and strategy.

By the later stages of the war both Britain and the US had developed a definite proficiency in employing specialist formations. This gradual increase in aptitude occurred in tandem with a more general growth of martial abilities, for, as General Browning would state, only a 'real expert who has behind him the basic and fundamental experiences of his trade can afford unorthodox methods .... Only the real expert can depart from comparative orthodoxy'.[1] This growth in abilities notwithstanding, it is evident that there were certain limitations with the development and employment of specialist formations during the war: the proliferation of these units was occasionally eccentric; command and control mechanisms could be cumbersome, confused and marred with animosity; and misuse and disuse was clearly evident. Such factors were, however, to be expected as endemic to the nascent nature of these formations. The achievements of these bodies which, with little or no formal pre-existent doctrine to guide them, managed to conduct a myriad of complicated activities across a wide range of different operational environments should not be unfairly judged on the same criteria that one might assess professional modern-day Special Operations Forces. It is, as Lewis has stated, not 'surprising that new organisations breaking new ground would encounter unforeseen difficulties'.[2] Problems were part of the evolutionary learning curve, and by the end of the war many had been overcome through practical experience; the development of efficient command structures; and a growing body of knowledge about, and an appreciation of, specialist capabilities.[3]

It has been made abundantly clear that the Anglo-American alliance was, in a number of places, an absolutely central factor in the wartime development, evolution and use of specialist formations. Such a close relationship, reflective of the broader military, diplomatic and political links between Britain and the US during the Second World War, was an essential ingredient for the successful conduct of coalition special operations lest they be hindered by counterproductive duplication of effort, confusion, or competition. Though both partners would ultimately benefit from this mutually supportive alliance, it is fair to suggest that the US profited more from this close

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[1] Memorandum by Lieutenant-General F.A.M Browning, CO Airborne Troops, 1944, DEFE 2/56
[2] Lewis, S.J. (1991), p.59
[3] Certain limitations, however, appear to be endemic to the nature of special operations and have yet to be satisfactorily resolved. Grievances over the misuse and disuse of specialist assets; problems with rigid definitions of roles and responsibilities; debates over autonomy versus control; inter-service and inter-agency conflicts of responsibility; and ignorance or antipathy from conventional bodies, remain perennial concerns of post-war SOF.

relationship than did the British. At a time when the US first began considering irregular warfare, the British had already developed an extensive range of specialist units and were amassing an ever-increasing body of practicable operational experience in their application. British willingness to share their established model and guide their new ally in this field propelled the American adoption of these units and enabled the US to hit the ground running to develop an extensive range of specialist formations all within the first six months of 1942.

For the US such rapid learning was not, however, without cost. The fee was that they had to firmly accept their position of student and sacrifice a margin of control by bowing to British experience. But had the British not been willing to share their knowledge or accommodate American requests for information and assistance, then it is likely that the US would have faced a longer and more troubled path towards the creation of these units than they ultimately did. The delayed US adoption of these formations did, however, ensure that by studying the British model, they could avoid many of the pitfalls, administrative and inter-agency problems which the British had experienced in their awkward 'private army' and 'mobs for jobs' formative stages. This learning period ensured that many American formations developed on more formal, or centralised, lines than did the majority of the British units. That many American special forces developed under the direct aegis of the same body which was responsible for catering for clandestine subversion, sabotage and espionage was certainly of benefit. Notwithstanding the fact that OSS control could, as the OGs found before their 'militarisation', occasionally impede smooth relations between specialist units and field commands, this arrangement can generally be regarded as a positive advantage that had obvious benefits for the economical proliferation, administration and command and control of American irregular units.

Though owing much to the British example, US perceptions and motivations behind the creation of ranger formations would have notable differences from those of the British. The Commandos, alongside SOE, were conceived at a time of strategic desperation and were viewed as an important means of waging offensive war at a time of conventional impotence. As such, Britain viewed these units as an important striking arm, placing some gravitas behind their creation. American ambitions for ranger formations, conceived at a time when the strategic situation had been stabilised (if not quite reversed), were much more subdued. Ranger formations were perceived as

temporary expedients, as a mechanism for gaining and disseminating combat and amphibious experience; and as a means to facilitate the conventional battle which was to be fought with mass and firepower. Once these goals had been attained; once conventional formations had gained experience and were able to conduct operations of the required scale and duration, there was, as has been noted, a definite awkwardness (with the exception of the 6th Rangers) in the ability and willingness of the US to adapt ranger formations to alternate applications. Once these units began to sustain casualties, were faced with disuse, or the undertaking of more conventional tasks, the US was quick to justify their disbandment in cost-effectiveness terms. The British, on the other hand, were much more inclined to retain the services of trained and cohesive units, adopting them accordingly to the requirements of the operational situation, rather than resorting to disbandment.

American adoption of special forces units would be far less reliant on the British example than were their ranger formations. In spite of this, between the Anglo-American special forces there would ultimately be much greater commonality, not to mention much greater cooperation in the field, than there ever was between the Commandos and the ranger-style formations. In light of the broadly independent paths through which these units were created, however, there could be noteworthy differences in the composition, methods and roles of the respective British and US special forces. Most significantly, there would be no direct American equivalent to units such as the SAS, which placed a premium on autonomous small-scale mobile harassment; and no British efforts to emulate either the composition or methods employed by the bilingual OGs or those of the extensive UDT organisation. Such diversity should perhaps be expected as being endemic to different military cultures.

Although British influence and aid to the US was understandably most prevalent in the earlier stages of the war when their ally was still learning, British patronage and assistance to America, their provision of instruction, training and operational transport etc., continued to be of great importance even in the later stages of the war. When the field of specialist formations is viewed through the lens of the Anglo-American alliance it is apparent that the more general trend of US military dominance towards the end of the war is broadly reversed. British hegemony in the field of specialist formations largely outlasted the declining significance of their overall strategic contribution.

With the exception of northern Burma, China and the Southwest Pacific, as a whole, it would not be until mid/late 1944 that the US in anyway began to approach the British volume of special operations. In these later stages of the war, however, it is most useful to regard the Anglo-American alliance as mutually beneficial and supportive. Once mobilised, American proficiency in these fields increased and, as it did so, information and knowledge was increasingly shared between the Allies and, more significantly, the burden of mounting and catering for these operations (especially in orchestrating the supply of indigenous movements) began to be lifted from the shoulders of the British. It is thus unnecessary to dwell excessively upon notions of innovation and cultural ownership. The fact remains that in the field of specialist formations at the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war, Britain and the US developed a relationship that was close, harmonious and mutually supportive.

In the introduction to this thesis it was suggested that it is undesirable to make the assumption that the wartime development of specialist formations was in anyway based on either pre-war attitudes and experiences, or upon national strategic cultures. Although culturally and historically speaking, the British were amenable to the use of specialist formations and irregular methods, their use of such measures during the Second World War owes much more to the unique conditions, requirements and opportunities which confronted them in 1939-1945 than it does to any esoteric concept of a historical or cultural predisposition. Before the war, the US certainly had both less familiarity and less cultural inclination towards these units than did the British and, during the war, the traditional American 'way of war' would certainly appear to be an obstacle towards the development of specialist formations: such units went against their antipathy of elite units; were ill-suited to their homogenous 'production-line' approach to mobilisation; and alien to their big unit focus on mass and concentration.

Whilst it can certainly be suggested that such factors, though suppressed in the early stages of the war, were of ultimate impediment towards the US adoption and use of ranger formations, it is not, however, warranted to assume that they were in any way a similar obstacle for special forces. Although America had difficulty utilising and accepting commando-style formations to the same extent as did Britain, US special forces would ultimately proliferate, in numerical terms, as extensively, and in practical terms, as effectively as they did amongst the culturally more predisposed British. One

only needs to examine the record of the OGs, Alamo Scouts, Detachment 101 or the UDTs to see American innovation, adaptability and virtuosity in these fields certainly comparable to that of the oft-regarded British 'masters'. Special forces found a role within the broader American 'way of war' and the likes of Roosevelt, Marshall, Eisenhower and Donovan would all develop at least an appreciation of how the application of minimal force in the right places could recoup advantages for their application of maximum force.

It is apparent that the conduct of special operations during the war was not subject to the same obstacles and common strategic dilemmas of politics, diplomacy or geography which effected conventional means. Specialist formations offered the means of applying force on a global scale, offering the Allies a sense of ubiquity by enabling operations to be undertaken in theatres in which it was politically or militarily impossible, unacceptable or unwarranted to conventional deploy. The employment of specialist formations could thus both circumvent and reinforce national strategic policies: they offered Britain a medium through which its more ambitious tangential 'Churchillian' strategies could be embraced without significant diplomatic backlash; and afforded the US an opportunity to undertake operations in peripheral theatres so abhorrent to conventional American strategy. Specialist formations were also a great political device; they helped Britain overcome the common criticism that they were too indecisive and circumspect, by providing evidence of activity and aggression. They would similarly help the US to overcome criticisms of them as being inexperienced, undisciplined and too reliant on mass and firepower, by providing evidence that Americans were capable of finesse in the professional use of minimum force.

Although this study has returned a favourable overall verdict upon both the impact and value of the Anglo-American specialist formations of the Second World War, it is important to note that shortly before, or soon after, the cessation of hostilities both Britain and the US would disband and demobilise the overwhelming majority of their commandos and special forces. The British policy towards the retention of the Commandos after the war reflected the general enthusiasm with which they had embraced the conception and utilisation of these formations during the war. Britain had come out of the Second World War with a firm idea about the value of utilising Commandos to prosecute amphibious assaults. Their experience of amphibious landings was honed in the Mediterranean and European theatres in which the virtues of

speed and surprise over the application of firepower had found a clear role for the utilisation of specialist amphibious shock troops, spearheaders and flank guards in the prosecution of landings. In mid-1944 a committee under the chairmanship of Air Marshal Sir Norman Bottomley was established to consider future inter-Service responsibilities for amphibious warfare, paying particular attention to the role of the Royal Marines therein. One of the conclusions reached by this committee held that the Royal Marines should be given sole responsibility for the maintenance of post-war specialist formations connected with amphibious activities.[4] Given the amphibious-oriented justification for their retention, it was natural that the Royal Marines be granted the post-war responsibility for the Commandos. Thus in late-1945 although all Army Commandos were disbanded, the Royal Marines were permitted to retain a permanent (albeit somewhat scaled down) Commando presence.

Given the difficulties which the US had in accepting ranger formations during the war, it is perhaps not surprising that they did not seek to retain, in the same manner as did the British, any of these formations after the war. Two principal factors reinforced this decision: Firstly, was the fact that in the later stages of the war not only had many ranger formations already been decimated by casualties and disbanded, but those which were retained (aside from the 6th Rangers) had, at best, been used infrequently. Secondly, and significantly, given the key British justification for retention of Commandos, was the fact that in the American mindset, any benefits which ranger units were assumed to have had in aiding the prosecution of amphibious assaults were overshadowed by the USMC/US Navy-dominant amphibious doctrine. The Pacific War had been successfully prosecuted upon the tenets of mass and firepower of 'amphibious blitzkriegs' and without any clear need for elite light infantry formations. For all the successes of commandos and rangers in aiding amphibious assaults, it should not be forgotten, as Heilbrunn reminds, that one '.... could possibly draw up an impressive list of coastal operations in which Commandos and Rangers did not take a leading part. Such incidents in particular led to the widespread belief that Commandos had no special function to perform'.[5]

Immediately after the end of the war the only special forces which Britain and the US would directly retain were similarly influenced by calculations of their potential value

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[4] Brigadier L.G. Hollis to Churchill, 21 August 1944, DEFE 2/1325
[5] Heilbrunn (1963), p.48

in future amphibious operations. In the American instance, only the UDTs would be retained. The extensive UDT organisation, which by early-1945 had already assimilated large numbers of personnel from other wartime maritime special forces, was the obvious choice for retention. Even in the firepower-centric doctrine of amphibious landings as exhibited in the Central Pacific, the UDTs had proven the value and necessity. At the end of the war, as the CO of UDT 6 would emphasise, these Teams had become '.... considered an integral and essential part of amphibious warfare. .... regardless of advancements made along more scientific lines; ... hand placed demolition charges and reconnaissance will be necessary in securing many beachheads.'[6]

Britain was similarly motivated. With no desire to lose the knowledge and experience gained during the war, and having no aspirations to be 'caught unprepared in any future war', it was agreed as early as October 1944 that Britain should retain a proportion of its special maritime capabilities after the war.[7] In doing so, however, it was made abundantly clear that the many disparate specialist maritime units which had existed during the war would need to be rationalised. Immediately after the war, therefore, in a continuation of a policy that had been steadily implemented from late-1944 onwards, each of the heretofore independent maritime formations were disbanded and a new Combined Operations Beach and Boat Section (COBBS) was established under the Admiralty. Various Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel who had served in units such as the COPPs, RMBPD and SRU during the war would be integrated into this new Section whilst those British Army personnel involved in such units (most obviously those in the SBS) were either returned to their parent units or demobilised.[8] However distasteful this might have been to some of those personnel involved, such a move was, as with the disbandment of the Army Commandos, a sensible precaution against those inter-service and inter-organisational problems which had existed during the war.

Despite various other Anglo-American specialist formations having amassed impressive wartime records, neither Britain nor the US would immediately choose to retain any other wartime specialist formation at the end of the war. The abiding

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[6] Carl P. Hagensen, Report on UDT 6, 30 September 1945, RG 38, World War II Action and Operational Reports, Box 788
[7] DDOD(I) Docket on SS Establishment - HMS Mount Stewart, 29 October 1944, ADM 1/26900
[8] Thompson (2000), p.419; Various documents, DEFE 2/988

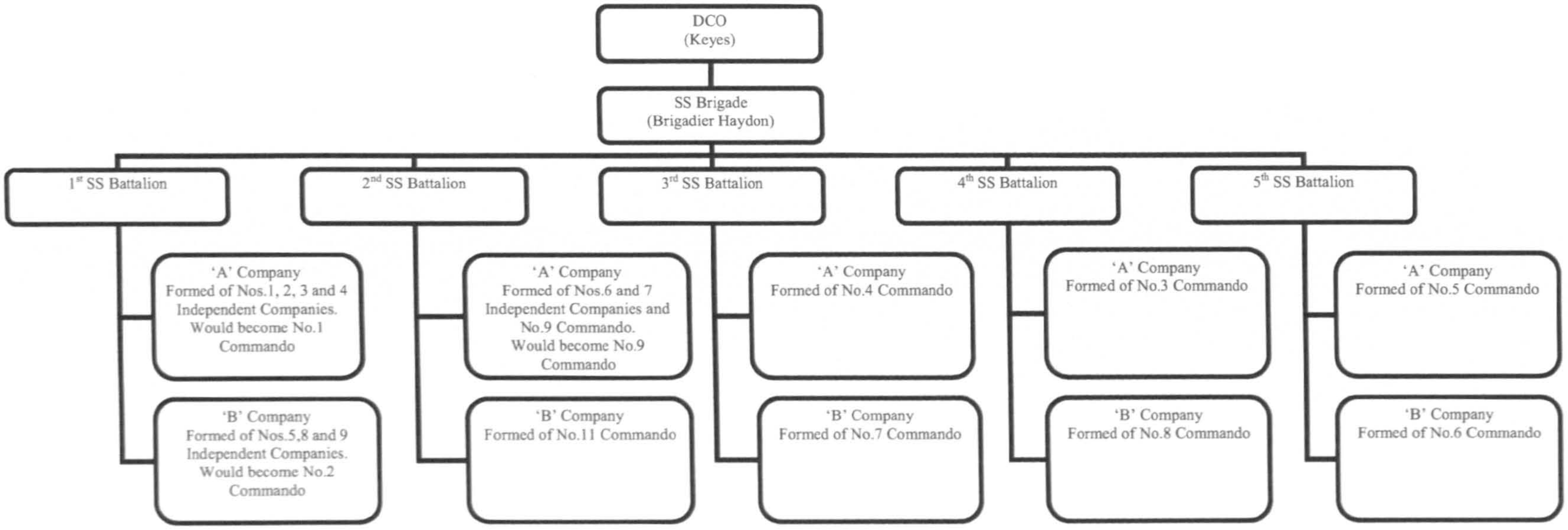
impression was that these units were wartime expedients which would have little place in lean and professional peacetime armed forces. The outbreak of peace ensured that the majority of formations, however successful they had been in the war, became regarded as surplus to requirement. For all of the achievements of these units, it was clear that the war had not ultimately been won by such ephemeral means. Victory was gained not in the shadows but in the application of mass and firepower. Nagasaki and Hiroshima punctuated this point, serving as an expression of force so powerful and so destructive that it would dwarf anything that specialist formations could hope to achieve. Although during the war specialist warriors would fight pitched battles to justify the retention, or even expansion, of their establishments, at the close of the war, however, the number of such irregular voices to argue for post-war establishments was distinctly lessened. Few of the men within wartime specialist formations were pre-war professional soldiers and there were definite tendencies for personnel to regard their wartime exploits merely as adventures and not recognise, or lobby for, any long-term continuation of such means. The majority of these men were as happy to be demobilised at the end of the war as were the bulk of other service personnel. Conversely, those truly irregular characters who had found a home in undertaking irregular activities during the war would often find themselves having great difficulty adjusting to the idea of garrison life in the peacetime military; just as the military itself would find problems in accommodating such individualistic personalities.

Within a relatively short period of time, however, both Britain and the US would face various political and military challenges that would compel a re-adoption, or redevelopment, of dedicated specialist formations. The gradual, and at times tumultuous, revival of specialist capabilities would draw greatly upon the experiences of the Second World War which had opened up minds to the potential of irregular formations and set a precedent for how future units should be organised, utilised and controlled. Although not all post-war units arose as direct lineal descendants of wartime formations, the overwhelming majority of the later units would remain greatly influenced by, or even be formed around, a cadre of experienced wartime veterans. The very existence of modern Special Operations Forces and elite light-infantry units thus owe a great deal to their wartime forebears and, in many regards, the seemingly ever-increasing prominence of such units in modern force structures serves as testimony to the successes of those units arising in the Second World War.

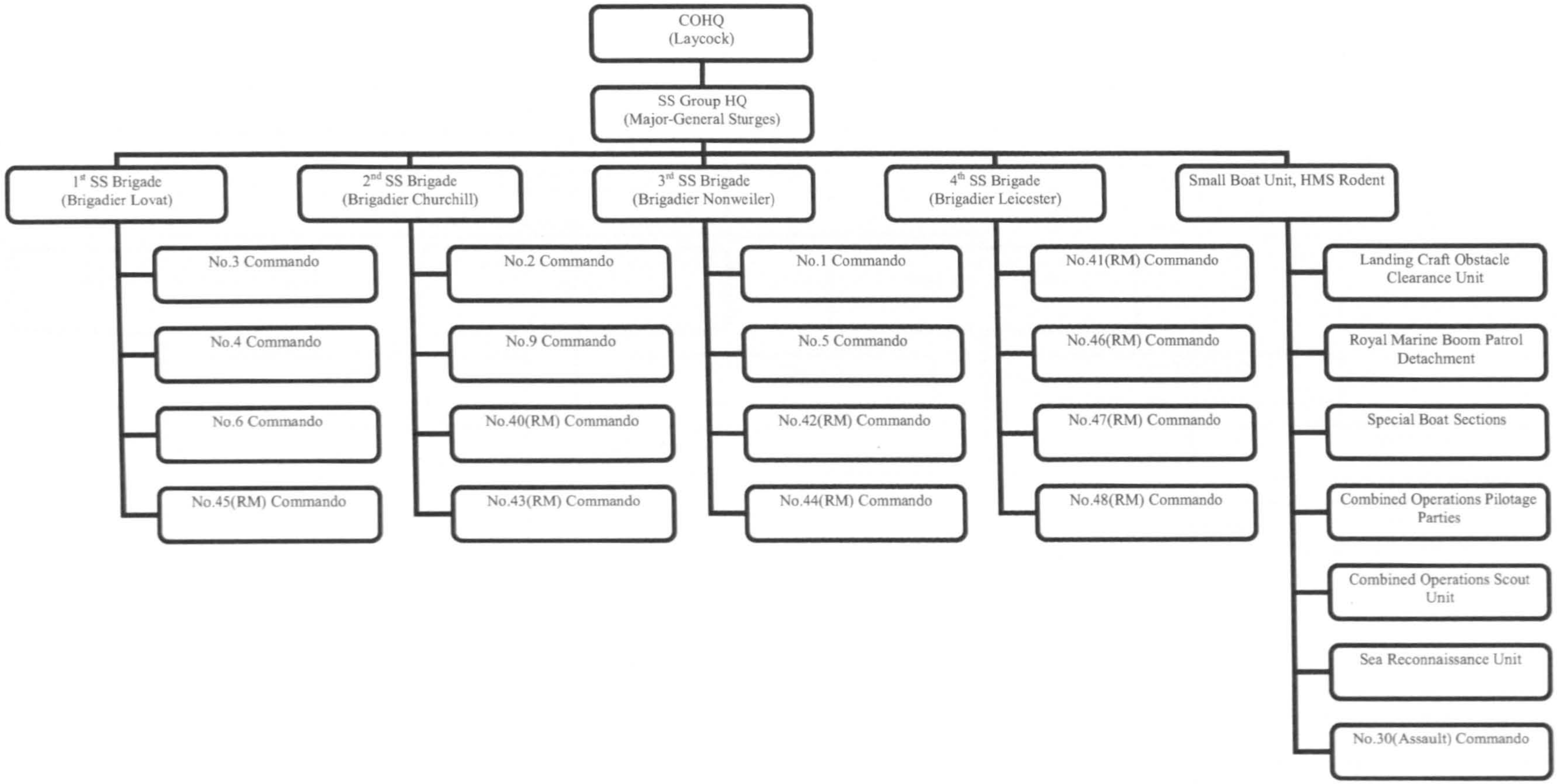
The years 1939-1945 bore witness to many military innovations which revolutionised the conduct of warfare; the development of specialist formations was one such point of innovation. The successes which both Britain and the US had in, both independently and collectively, inventing and practising a fundamentally new way of waging war were significant, and serve as evidence of the overall flexibility, innovatory prowess, quality and adaptability of both allies during the Second World War.

Appendix I
Organisational Charts

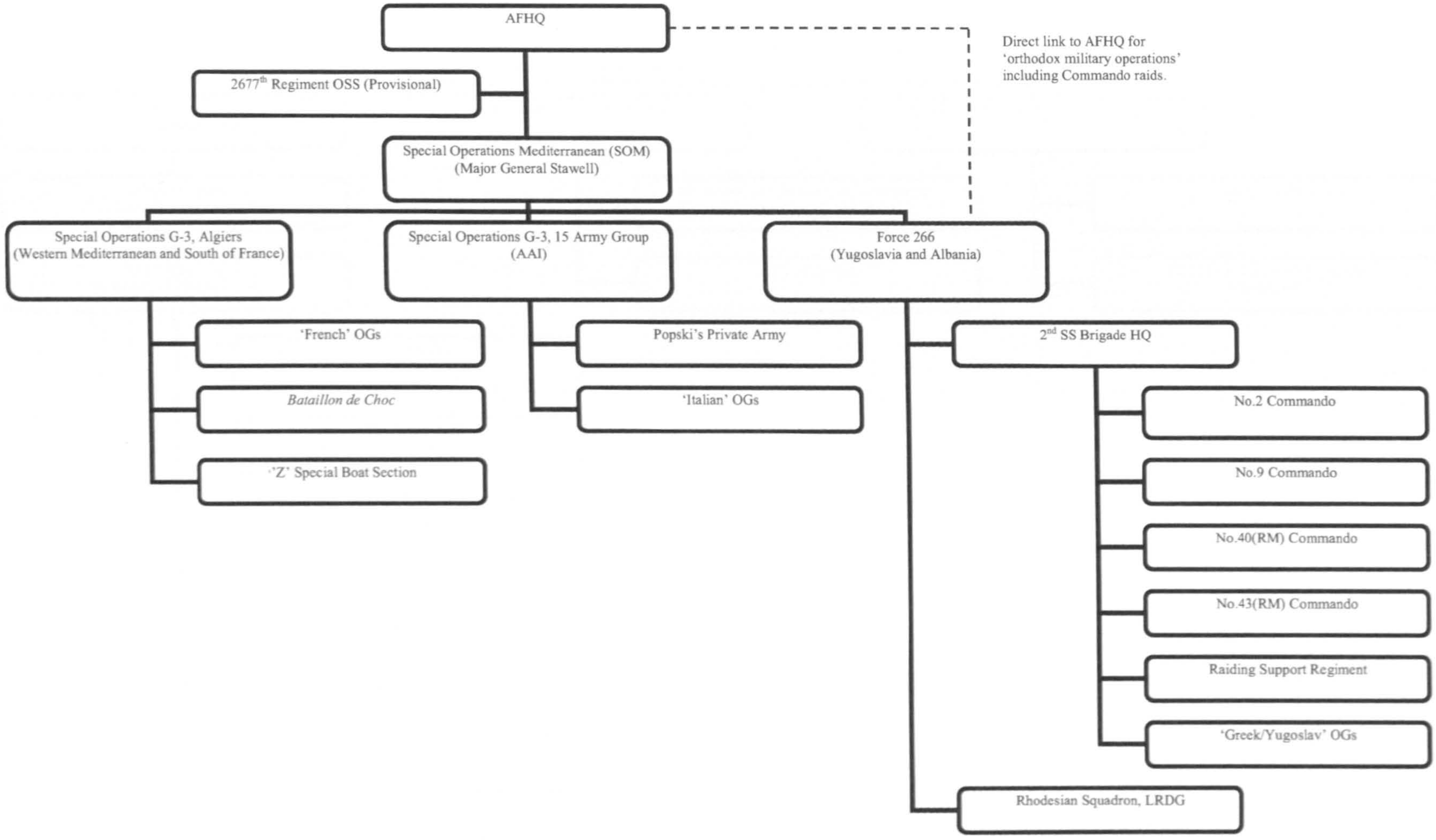
Special Service Brigade Organisation, November 1940



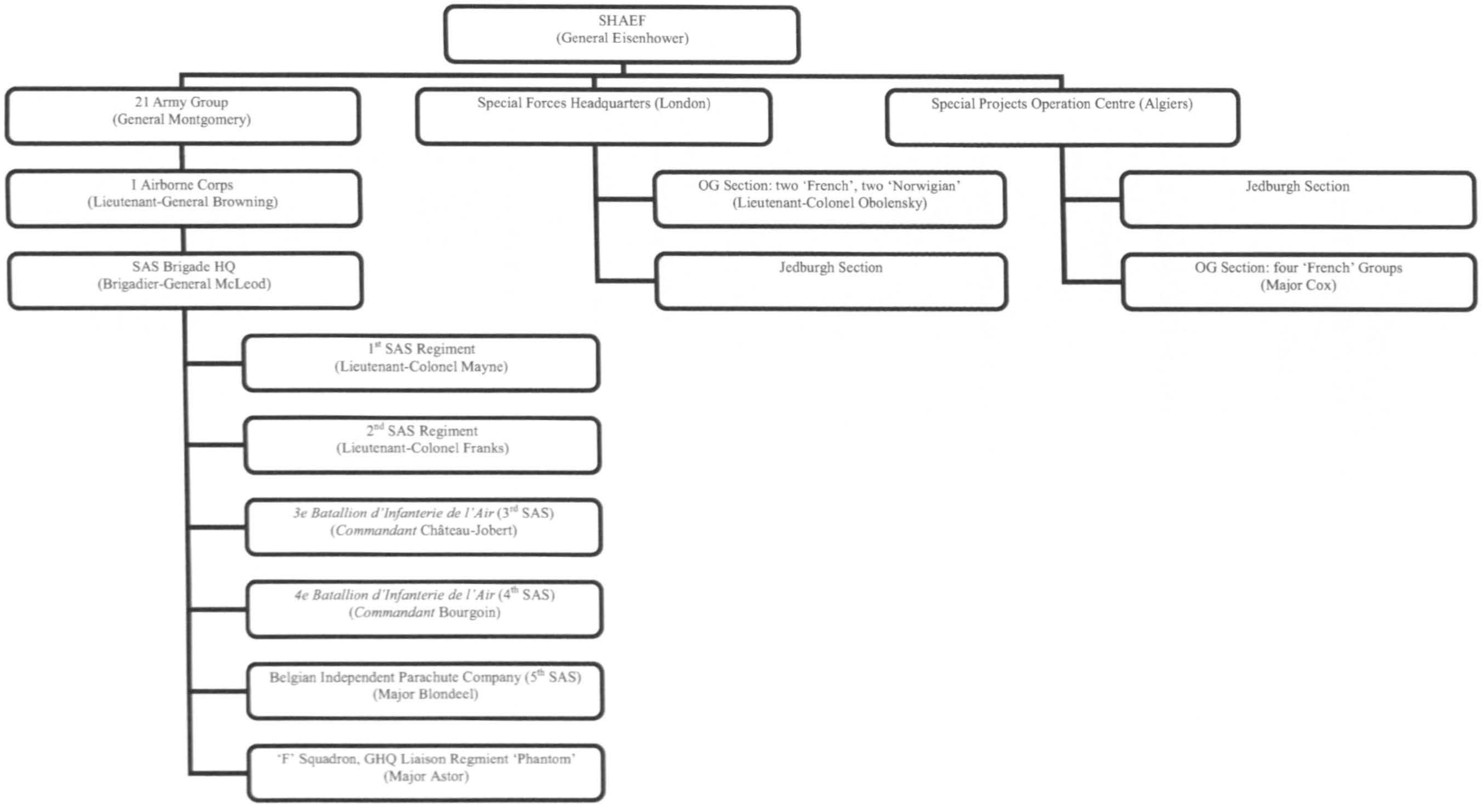
Special Service (Commando) Organisation, February 1944



Command arrangements for specialist formations, Mediterranean Theatre, April 1944



Anglo-American special forces command organisation for the invasion of France, June 1944



Appendix II
Estimates of manpower within Anglo-American specialist formations[1]

late-1940

British

	Total personnel
Special Service Troops (Commandos and Independent Companies)[2]	5,000
Long Range Desert Group	200
Special Boat Section, No.8 Commando	30
101 Troop, No.6 Commando	30
	5,260

Comparison between personnel in commando, or ranger, formations and those in special forces

Commandos	5,000
British special forces	260

mid-1941

British

	Total personnel
Army Commandos	6,500
Long Range Desert Group	200
'L' Detachment Special Air Service Brigade	60
1st Special Boat Section	30
101 Troop No.6 Commando	30
	6,820

Comparison between personnel in commando, or ranger, formations and those in special forces

Commandos	6,500
British special forces	320

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[1] Tables based on the maximum establishment, the 'on book' strengths, of these units. In many instances, however, these are estimates and the disparity between what a force was entitled to have and what it actually had could be acute. Because of difficulties with recruitment and casualties formations were rarely the size which they were authorised to be. For example, in mid-1943 the Commandos had a base figure (as stipulated in these figures) of 7,000 men (based 5,000 Army and 2,000 Marine Commandos); yet Ladd in *Commandos and Rangers* (p.167) estimates that at this time there were not more than 3,700 Commandos. As the disparities between listed and actual strengths are hard to ascertain, these figures, whilst estimates, err on the side of maximum totals. Further, these figures are made on the basis of combatant personnel and do not take into account the by no means moderate numbers of administrative, planning, logistics and support personnel so essential to the application of these formations.

[2] On the basis of five 'SS Battalions' each consisting of two 'Companies' each of approximately 500 men. See Appendix I for organisational chart.

mid-1942

British

	Total personnel
Army Commandos[3]	5,000
Royal Marine Commandos	500
Royal Navy Commandos	608
Long Range Desert Group	200
'L' Detachment Special Air Service Brigade	200
Indian Long Range Squadron	100
Libyan Arab Force Commando	25
Small Scale Raiding Force	50
No.30 (Assault) Commando	250
Special Interrogation Group	30
1st Special Boat Section	30
2nd Special Boat Section	30
Sea Reconnaissance Unit	40
Royal Marine Boom Patrol Detachment	60
	7,123

US

	Total personnel
US Army Rangers	450
First Special Service Force[4]	1,500
USMC Raiders	1,800
Scouts & Raiders	150
OSS Detachment 101[5]	100
Navy Group China (SACO)	200
	4,200

Comparison between personnel in commando, or ranger, formations and those in special forces

Commandos	6,108
US rangers	3,750
British special forces	1,015
US special forces	450

[3] Including, in this assessment, the 1st SS Regiment (or Middle East Commando).
[4] FSSF estimates, for these figures, are made on the basis of American personnel only; there were an additional estimated 1,000 Canadian personnel in the Force.
[5] Not all OSS Detachment 101 and SACO personnel were operational but due to the difficulty of making a distinction, the figures for these units include other non-operational American personnel employed.

mid-1943

British

	Total personnel
Army Commandos	5,000
Royal Marine Commandos	2,000
Royal Navy Beach Commandos	608
Long Range Desert Group	200
2nd Special Air Service Regiment	450
Special Raiding Squadron	250
Special Boat Squadron	250
Popski's Private Army	100
No.30 (Assault) Commando	250
'Z' Special Boat Section	30
2nd Special Boat Section	30
Combined Operations Pilotage Parties	100
Sea Reconnaissance Unit	40
Royal Marine Boom Patrol Detachment	60
Combined Operations Scout Unit	120
Landing Craft Obstacle Clearance Unit	440
'V' Force[6]	100
	10,028

US

	Total personnel
US Army Rangers	1,350
29th Rangers	180
First Special Service Force	1,500
USMC Raiders	3,600
Scouts & Raiders	150
OSS Detachment 101	200
Navy Group China (SACO)	200
Beach Jumpers	200
OSS Operational Groups	210
OSS Maritime Unit	100
USMC Reconnaissance Company	200
Naval Combat Demolitions Unit	60
	7,950

Comparison between personnel in commando, or ranger, formations and those in special forces

Commandos	7,608
US rangers	6,630
British special forces	2,420
US special forces	1,320

[6] Estimates are inclusive of the Assam Rifle personnel employed; but do not include the indigenous partisans raised.

mid/late-1944

British

	Total personnel
Army Commandos	4,000
Royal Marine Commandos	4,500
Royal Navy Beach Commandos	608
Long Range Desert Group	200
Special Air Service Regiments[7]	900
Special Boat Squadron	250
Popski's Private Army	100
30 Assault Unit	200
Raiding Support Regiment	600
'Z' Special Boat Section	30
2nd Special Boat Section	30
Combined Operations Pilotage Parties	200
Sea Reconnaissance Unit	40
Royal Marine Boom Patrol Detachment	60
Combined Operations Scout Unit	120
Landing Craft Obstacle Clearance Unit	440
'V' Force	600
Jedburghs (British)	100
	12,978

US

	Total personnel
US Army Rangers	1,350
First Special Service Force	1,500
Merrill's Marauders	2,500
Scouts & Raiders	150
OSS Detachment 101	800
Navy Group China (SACO)	800
Beach Jumpers	480
OSS Operational Groups	455
Alamo Scouts	140
OSS Maritime Unit	200
USMC Reconnaissance Battalion	400
Underwater Demolition Teams	1,000
Jedburghs (US)	100
	9,875

Comparison between personnel in commando, or ranger, formations and those in special forces

Commandos	9,108
US rangers	5,350
British special forces	3,870
US special forces	4,525

[7] The 1st and 2nd SAS were joined in the SAS Brigade by 1,000 French and 500 Belgian personnel.

early/mid-1945

British

	Total personnel
Army Commandos	4,000
Royal Marine Commandos	4,500
Royal Navy Beach Commandos	608
Long Range Desert Group	200
Special Air Service Regiments	900
Special Boat Service	250
Popski's Private Army	100
30 Assault Unit	200
Raiding Support Regiment	600
'Z' Special Boat Section	30
Special Boat Sections[8]	90
Combined Operations Pilotage Parties	200
Sea Reconnaissance Unit	40
Royal Marine Detachment 385	130
Royal Marine Boom Patrol Detachment	60
Landing Craft Obstacle Clearance Unit	440
'V' Force	600
Jedburghs (British)	50
SAARF (British)	100
	13,098

US

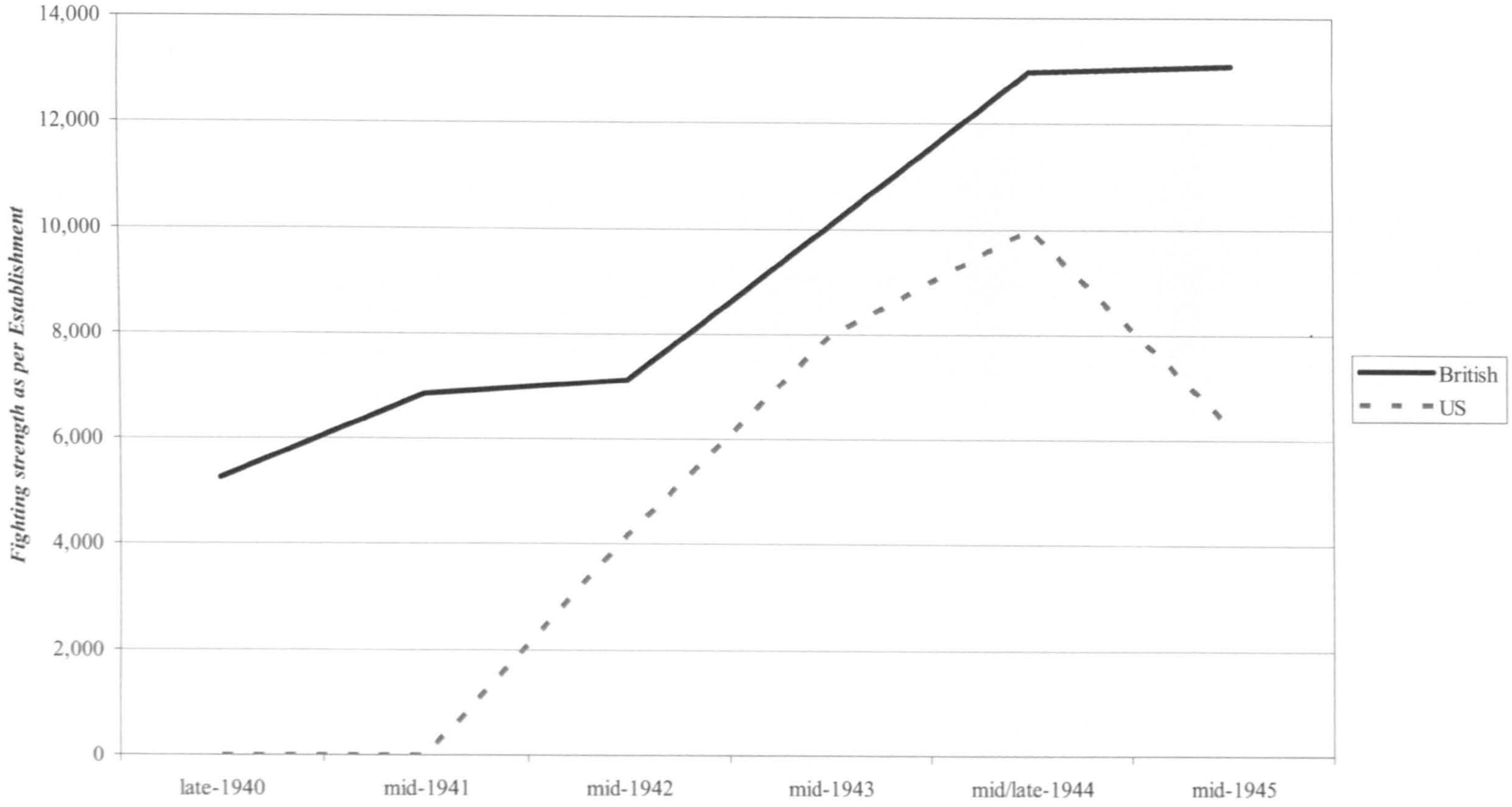
	Total personnel
US Army Rangers	1,350
Scouts & Raiders	150
OSS Detachment 101	1,000
Navy Group China (SACO)	1,000
Beach Jumpers	480
OSS Operational Groups	350
Alamo Scouts	140
OSS Maritime Unit	100
USMC Reconnaissance Battalion	400
Underwater Demolition Teams	1,000
Jedburghs (US)	50
SAARF (US)	100
	6,120

Comparison between personnel in commando, or ranger, formations and those in special forces

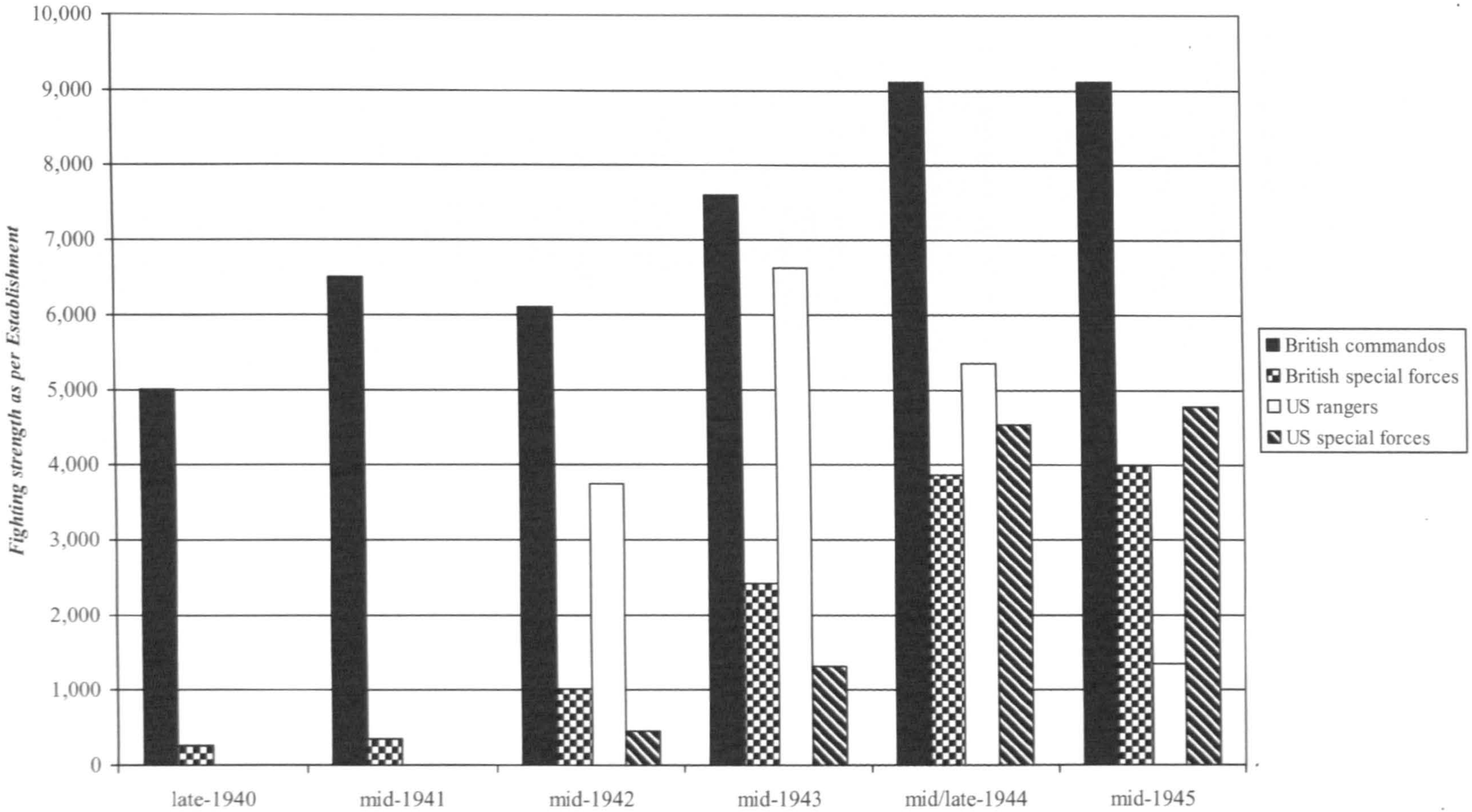
Commandos	9,108
US rangers	1,350
British special forces	3,870
US special forces	4,770

[8] Including 'A', 'B' and 'C' Groups sent to SEAC.

Comparison of British and American specialist forces manpower



Comparison between personnel in commando, or ranger, formations and those in special forces



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WO 106/4290	"Dragoon": Operations "Hardtack", "Candlestick" and "Manacle": raids on French coast.
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WO 201/747	Special Air Service Regiment: Battle file.
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WO 201/756	Raiding Forces: plans for operations.
WO 201/760	Long Range Desert Group: summary of operations.
WO 201/761	Long Range Desert Group: situation report.
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WO 218/35	4 Commando.
WO 218/37	6 Commando.
WO 218/41	12 Commando.
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WO 218/49	1 Commando.
WO 218/57	12 Commando.
WO 218/58	14 Commando.
WO 218/64	2 Commando.
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Record Group 127 – Records of the U.S. Marine Corps

History and Museums Division, Reports, Studies and Plans relating to World War II Military Operations, 1941-1956

Box 5; NND 984110

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Box 7; Beach Reconnaissance (General).

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Box 2; Bougainville.

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Box 66; 1st Raider Regiment War Diary, 15 March 1943 - 30 September 1943.

Box 69; 2nd Raider Battalion War Diary, 1 May 1943 - 31 August 1943.

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Box 79; V MAC [Fifth Marine Amphibious Corps] Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion Readiness Reports, April 1944 - June 1944.

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Entry 418 – Office of Director of Plans and Operations, Security Classified General Correspondence, 1943-45

Box 682; Folder 320.2 Africa, Case 584 to 649

Box 1249; Folder 381 ETO, Case 108 to 111

Entry 421 – Records of Operations Division, Top-Secret "American-British-Canadian" Correspondence Relating to the Organisational Planning and General Combat Operations During World War II and the Early Postwar Period 1940-1948

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Box 8; Folder 000.51; Subversive activity, Jedburghs.

Box 150; Folder 323.361; Command for US-British operations.

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Box 284; Folder 370.23 (5-2-44); Coordination of resistance groups.

Box 285; Folder 370.5 (2-2-43); Employment of FSSF.

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Entry 2 – Geographic Files 1942-1945

Box 13; Folder 370.64; Guerrilla operations in the Balkans.

Box 58; Folder 350.05; Dieppe Raid.

Box 153; Folder 385; Special Operations from North Africa.

Box 158; Folder 381 (7-15-42); Employment of FSSF.

<u>Record Group 226 - Records of the Office of Strategic Services 1940-1946</u>

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Entry 92 – COI/OSS Central Files

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Box 159; Folders 39-40; OSS: Maritime Units.

Box 160; Folders 1-8; OSS: Maritime Units.

Box 192; Folders 1-5; OSS: History Det. 101.

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Box 329; Folders 10-12; North Africa OG.

Box 490; Folders 26-28; OSS: Maritime Unit in Asia.

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Box 16; French Resistance.

Box 17; French Resistance.

Box 28; 2677th Regiment progress reports.

Box 29; 2677th Regiment progress reports.

Box 34; OGs on Vis.

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Box 46; OG in Italy.

Box 54; OG in Balkans and METO MU.

Box 63; Reports on MU [3/4].

Box 64; Det 404.

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Entry 144 – Field Station Files: Algiers, Austria, Bari, Belgium, Burma, Cairo and Calcutta

Box 68; Folders 586-99A; OG (Bari).

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Box 12; Folders 231-234; Commando Op.

Box 14; Folder 249; OSS: SACO Relationship.

Box 82; Folder 1194; MU (London).

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Entry 154 – Field Station Files: Kunming

Box 56; SO (Caserta).

Box 162; Folders 2760-2774; OG (Kunming).

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Entry 161 – Schools and Training Branch Records

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Entry 190 – Field Station Files: History of OSS aid to French Resistance

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Box 740; Folders 1462-1463; Jedburgh History.

Box 741; Folder 1469; Jedburgh Origin and Developments.

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Box 34; Folder 158; OG (Kunming).

Entry 210 – Previously withdrawn documents

Box 63; Folders 1521-1512; War Diary 2671/CO A.

Box 72; Folder 2537; History, SOE Disagreement.

Record Group 319 – Records of the Army Staff

Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3 Operations, Records Section

Box 380; Decimal File, March 1950-1951, 322 Ranger.

Record Group 331 – Records of Allied Operational and Occupation Headquarters, World War II

Entry 1 – SHAEF Office of the Chief of Staff, Secretary, General Staff, Decimal Files

Box 61; 70 Land and Sea Reconnaissance.

Entry 2 – SHAEF Office of the Chief of Staff, Secretary, General Staff, Geographical Correspondence File, 1943-45

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